

Note to Chapter VI

In sources other than President Hoover's public papers there is supporting evidence for the proposition that Secretary Stimson believed strongly in the enforcement of the non-recognition doctrine by the application of sanctions, as distinguished from President Hoover's view of the doctrine. While Secretary Stimson was in Geneva in 1932 (above, p. 114), the Under-Secretary of State, William R. Castle, delivered an address before the American Conference on International Justice in Washington, May 4, 1932, in which he touched upon the subject of sanctions. The address was published by the American Peace Society in its journal, *World Affairs*, for June, 1932. In this paper Mr. Castle rejected, as out of keeping with the American tradition, a proposal for putting "teeth in the [Kellogg] Pact" by an amendment binding the signatories to make war on the nation that breaks the pledge to settle disputes by peaceful means. The idea of war to prevent war Mr. Castle regarded as a contradiction in terms. He likewise rejected the idea of using such sanctions as the embargo or official boycott as an instrument for bringing pledge-breakers to book. "This idea also," he said, "is opposed by the [Hoover] administration, primarily because an official boycott is an act which would almost surely lead to war."

In response to an inquiry which I directed to Mr. Castle in January, 1946, he replied that he had showed this address to President Hoover before it was delivered and that the President had approved it.

On May 5, 1932, Mr. Castle, also with the approval of President Hoover, delivered an address before the Methodist Convention at Atlantic City, in which he reiterated his objection to the use of sanctions, such as the boycott, in attempts to enforce the Kellogg Pact. After his return from Europe, Secretary Stimson informed Mr. Castle that he regarded the Atlantic City address as ill-advised and as cutting the ground from under Innis in respect of the embargo question.

CHAPTER VII

Hewing to the Isolationist Line in 1934, 1933, and

Although during the year 1934 the war clouds grew bigger and blacker on the world horizon, President Roosevelt adhered to the course of non-entanglement in foreign quarrels. In his annual message to Congress in January, he devoted nearly all his attention to the progress of the domestic recovery. To foreign affairs he granted only a glances.

The President confessed that he could not present to Congress "a picture of complete optimism regarding world affairs." Outside this hemisphere, he said, fear of immediate or future aggression, vast expenditures for armaments, and the continued building up of trade barriers prevented "any great progress in peace or trade agreements." As to the war debts, the President expressed the hope that he could report later on these obligations "owed the Government and people of this country by the Governments and peoples of other countries." He referred to small payments made by several nations during the previous year and noted that Finland had paid her obligation in full.

And what in these circumstances was the policy to be pursued by the United States? President Roosevelt announced that he was opposed to political entanglements with Europe, although ready to cooperate on certain terms: "I have made it clear that the United States cannot take part in political arrangements in Europe but that we stand ready to cooperate at any time in practicable measures on a world basis looking to immediate reduction of armaments and the lowering of the barriers against commerce."²

Few indeed are the references to international affairs in

¹ For definition of isolationism, see above, p. 17 n.

² *Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin Delano Roosevelt*, III, 12.

Volume III of President Roosevelt's *Public Papers* for the year 1934, correctly described in the subtitle: "The Advance of Recovery and Reform." Only one item on the League of Nations appears in the index: a note on the withdrawal of Paraguay from the League. In a special message in June the President reported to Congress on the subject of the payment of the war debts and gave no evidence of any disposition to recommend either cancellation or material reduction. He reminded the debtors that, if they did not pay, the people of the United States would have to shoulder the burden and that the people of this country were taking note of the use which debtor countries were making of their resources instead of paying their debts. He refused to accept any scheme for connecting these war debts with the treatment of reparations in Europe, informed the debtors that they were expected to make substantial sacrifices in efforts to meet their obligations, and invited them to regard these obligations as sacred.³

During the year 1934 President Roosevelt acted on his campaign promises with regard to measures for reciprocal tariff bargaining with foreign countries (above, p. 145). On March 2 he asked Congress to empower the Executive to make commercial agreements with foreign nations and to "modify existing duties and import restrictions in such a way as will benefit American agriculture and industry." While stating clearly that a full and permanent domestic recovery depended "in part" upon a revived and strengthened international trade, he appended a fundamental reservation: "*it is important that the country possess within its borders a necessary diversity and balance to maintain a rounded national life*, that it must sustain activities vital to national defense and that such interests cannot be sacrificed for passing advantage." As if remembering that under the National Industrial Recovery Act he was endeavoring to uphold domestic price, hour, and wage schedules, the President assured Congress

3. *Ibid.*, III, 275 ff.

that in any reciprocal tariff bargaining “due heed” would be paid to such requirements in reducing tariff rates.⁴

To internationalists who regarded a lowering of trade barriers as a step toward world unity, the President’s message offered no consolation. Here was no flat proposal to cut tariff rates all along the line, as Cordell Hull had urged in 1932, on the theory that thereby American economy would prosper, standards of life be raised all over the earth, and the cause of peace advanced. Nor was there in the message any thing more than a program for protecting and promoting American agriculture and/or industry by entering into cautious bargaining with commercial rivals abroad. Doubly assured by the message, Congress responded by passing the measure known as the Reciprocal Tariff Act or the Trade Agreements Act, signed on June 12, 1934.

In the administration of the law, President Roosevelt was careful. No revolutionary cuts were made in the tariff rates; indeed on the average few cuts that excited alarms among the well-protected interests.⁵ When the President reported on progress under the law in 1938, he expressed the opinion that the trade agreements negotiated according to its terms “have substantially increased our foreign trade.” Only then did he offer a crumb of comfort to peace advocates; after speaking of the tangible benefits, he said, “there have been even greater and more far-reaching intangible effects which are measured in terms of the spirit of peace and of more friendly relations between Nations.”⁶

Although on its face the Trade Agreements Act looked like an economic document pure and simple, it became in time an instrument in the diplomatic skirmishing between the United States and Great Britain over political difficulties in Europe and Asia. In the Act both the President and Secre-

4. *Ibid.*, III, 113 ff. (Italics supplied.)

5. The per cent of imports for consumption which came in free of duty actually lower on the average for 1936-40 than for 1931-35. *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (U. S. Government Printing Office, 1942), p. JJ6.

6. *Public Papers*, III, 117.

tary Hull found a wedge for breaching the wall of tariff preference around the British Empire and increasing American trade with the Empire, not forgetting the sale of raw cotton. On the other side Great Britain, while reluctant to offend the outlying members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, realized that a trade agreement with the United States would be useful as a sign to Germany and Japan that an Anglo-Saxon understanding had been effected. As time went on the political and diplomatic phases of "reciprocal trading" became more and more evident to observers in London and Washington.⁶ But when the Act was passed in 1934 only adepts could foresee all the main political utilities inherent in reciprocal "trade negotiations."

Internationalists who scanned the record of American foreign policy for the year 1934 could find therein no sign of retreat on the part of President Roosevelt from the repudiation of the League of Nations publicly announced on February 2, 1932. They could, it is true, report a few "moral gains." A representative of the United States had taken part in another session of the Disarmament Conference (at which nothing visible was accomplished). The United States had joined the International Labor Office (but that meant little more than participation in endless discussions, the collection of statistics, research, and the publication of reports; certainly it involved no commitments whatever to internationalism or collective security).

Cooperation with the League in its technical and humanitarian work continued along lines well established under previous Republican administrations. Efforts were made to reach agreements with Great Britain and Japan for a continuation of naval arms limitations, but the result was a notice from the Japanese Government that the Washington Naval Pact would come to an end on December 31, 1936, with the expiration of the London Naval Pact of 1930. William T. Stone, of the Foreign Policy Association, tersely summed up

6. Frank C. Hanighen, "Will the U. S. Take Trade and Fight for the British?" *New York Post*, September 13, 1938; London date line.

the record: "The year, 1934, was marked by a continuation of the trend toward national self-sufficiency which had become apparent since the onset of the world depression in 1929." 7

Nevertheless the Associates of the Geneva Research Center, as usual, unearthed vestiges of growing internationalism in the United States and announced their discoveries: "American relations with the League of Nations during 1934 were intensified as a result both of the growing strength and vitality of the League and of the slow evolution of American foreign policy out of the 1920 isolationist period." 8 They made much of American cooperation in the non-political activities of the League and in a section on "Intellectual Cooperation" they reported that Professor James T. Shotwell, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, had taken an active part "unofficially" in the work of the League's committee on Teaching and Intellectual Cooperation. 9 Yet the Geneva Associates did not and could not cite a single statement or action by President Roosevelt that transgressed the doctrine of American neutrality and non entanglement in the power politics of the League, which he had expounded on February 2, 1932.

The Roosevelt Administration, it is true, continued the policy of refusing to recognize Manchukuo, 10 but it announced no intention to work up a program of collective security or collaboration with other powers for the coercion of Japan. John M. Mathews correctly described the tactics of the year when he said that the Administration showed "no disposition to adopt the role of leadership in marshaling world opinion against Japan." 11 Secretary Hull made no journey to Geneva in 1934, after the manner of Secretary Stimson in 1932, seeking the aid of the League or its powerful members in attempts to oust Japan from Manchukuo.

7. *American Year Book* (1934), p. 70.

8. *Ibid.* (1934), pp. 76 ff.

9. *Ibid.*

10. See above, pp. 114 ff.

11. *American Year Book* (1934), p. 55.

Secretary Hull restricted himself to the delivery of speeches on transgressions of international morality, violations of "the sanctity of contracts," the flouting of "international treaty obligations," and warlike threats indulged in by other governments in various parts of the world.¹² Yet, whatever their implications in terms of ultimate actions, these speeches, even if taken in connection with the non recognition doctrine, conveyed to the American public in general no intimations of departures from the Administration's official pronouncements against entanglement and participation in foreign wars.¹³

President Roosevelt's pronouncements in 1935 reaffirmed his dedication to peace for the United States, abstention from political entanglements abroad, and promotion of

12. For example, Secretary Hull's address before the American Society of International Law, April 29, 1933; address to the alumni of Cumberland University, May 5, 1934; address to the Graduating Class of the College of William and Mary, June 11, 1934; address before the National Foreign Trade Council, November 1, 1934.

13. Having before me a dossier of American and European materials on American imperialism in the Far East, many papers pertaining to Secretary Stimson's maneuvers in respect of that region, copies of Secretary Hull's addresses on international morality, and the little information which the State Department had seen fit to make public in 1934, I came to the conclusion that the Roosevelt Administration would eventually involve the United States in a war with Japan. If studies of diplomatic history and international law under Professor John Bassett Moore and on my own account had taught me anything, it was that the high officials of great States could not continue indefinitely to lay down moral rules for other governments to follow without being called upon to retract or to employ the historic instrument for enforcing them—war. My conclusion as to where insistence on the non-recognition policy, Secretary Hull's formulations of morality for the world, and the prolongation of the crisis in domestic economy would finally lead was presented in an article, "National Politics and War," published in *Scribner's Magazine* for February, 1935. In this article I said that President Roosevelt "will choose" this war or "stumble into" it, and closed with the following lines: "The Jeffersonian party gave the nation the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and its participation in the World War. The Pacific War awaits. Beyond that lies the Shadowy Shape of Things to Come." In passing, it may be noted that the Democratic platform of 1900, although it denounced Republican imperialism in unmeasured terms and favored independence for the Filipinos, also assured to the Philippines "protection from outside interference such as has been given for nearly a century to the republics of Central and South America." A short time before his death Theodore Roosevelt himself discovered that the Philippines were "the Achilles' heel" of the American Republic.

recovery at home by resort to domestic measures. Volume IV of his *Public Papers* carries a domestic subtitle, "The Court Disapproves." While it contains more references to peace and foreign affairs than Volume III, for the year 1934, it provides more emphatic evidence of the President's resolve to stay out of the League of Nations and similar commitments of an international character.

In his annual message of January 4, 1935, to Congress, he spoke of the old jealousies abroad, old passions, and "new strivings for armament and power" and he drew a contrast in the American spirit: "I believe, however, that our own peaceful and neighborly attitude toward other Nations is coming to be understood and appreciated. . . . There is no ground for apprehension that our relations with any Nation will be otherwise than peaceful." And turning to domestic affairs, he repeated a statement that he had made in 1934: "Among our objectives I place the security of the men, women, and children of the Nation first." 14

On its own motion, in January, 1935, the Senate began a final debate on the last fragment of internationalism inherited from President Wilson's regime: resolutions providing for the membership of the United States in the World Court established under the general auspices of the League of Nations. The issue had been dragging along for years. By tortuous negotiations and by reservations on vital points, the resolutions had been diluted until they contained no words that could possibly impair the sovereignty of the United States. Supported by platform declarations of the Republican party, President Coolidge and President Hoover had approved the idea of joining the World Court, despite its Democratic origins. Organizations of many kinds, including the League of Women Voters, flooded the Senate with petitions demanding American adherence to the Court. On no grounds could the matter of adopting the resolutions be considered partisan in nature. Moreover, there were sixty-eight Democrats in the Senate—enough to carry the resolutions

14. *Public Papers*, IV, 15 ff.

without aid from the Republican side in case a party split occurred. Advocates of the Court expected victory.

By a vote of fourteen to seven the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate, on January 9, recommended ratification, with an additional reservation. But a storm of opposition to the project was blowing. Father Charles E. Coughlin inveighed against it over the radio and William Randolph Hearst denounced it through the newspapers he controlled in strategic centers over the country. Accordingly the issue was "hot" when President Roosevelt decided to act. On January 16, 1935, he sent a special message to the Senate urging that body to pass resolutions of adherence to the World Court.

In this message the President brought into notice the non partisan character of the proposal, spoke of it as representing an "obviously sound and thoroughly American policy," and said: "I hope that at an early date the Senate will advise and consent to the adherence by the United States" to the protocols in question. He recommended "that the Senate's consent be given in such form as not to defeat or to delay the objective of adherence." He expressly declared that "the sovereignty of the United States will be in no way diminished or jeopardized by such action."¹⁵

Despite the President's urging, the opposition in the Senate, including many Democratic Senators, was unshaken. Advocates of ratification, remembering how easily the President had brought recalcitrant party members in Congress into line during and since the famous "hundred days" of 1933, argued that he should now designate the resolutions of adherence to the World Court as a "must" measure and give the necessary orders to Democratic Senators.¹⁶ But appar-

15. *Ibid.*, IV, 40 f.

16. At the time this contest was on, I was in Washington and in touch with advocates of entering the World Court. Several of them expressed to me great regret that President Roosevelt did not "instruct" recalcitrant Democratic Senators to vote for adherence to the Court. It was reported in the Senate lobby that he was in close negotiations with the Democratic managers in the Senate. If so, he did not or could not bring sufficient pressure on them to force ratification.

ently he did not do this; or, if he did, his orders were disobeyed; for on January 29, 1935, the Court project was defeated by a vote of fifty-two yeas and thirty-six nays—a few votes short of the two-thirds majority necessary for adoption.

After the dispute between Italy and Ethiopia had advanced far on the way toward war, President Roosevelt issued a statement, August 1, 1935, in which he referred to proceedings of the League Council with regard to the quarrel and said simply: “I wish to voice the hope of the people and the Government of the United States that an amicable solution will be found and that peace will be maintained.”¹⁷ When the Italo-Ethiopian War broke out, the President proclaimed an embargo on the shipment of arms, under the recent Neutrality Act; and several days later, October 30, 1935, he made a public statement warning war profiteers, in which he declared: “This Government is determined not to become involved in the controversy and is anxious for the restoration and maintenance of peace.”¹⁸

Not only did President Roosevelt make various incidental references to his resolve against involving the nation in foreign quarrels and wars during the year 1935. On several occasions he expressed this resolve with special force. In approving the Neutrality Act, August 31, 1935, he commented adversely on the inflexible provisions of that measure; but he informed the public that “The policy of the Government is definitely committed to the maintenance of peace and the avoidance of any entanglements which would lead us into conflict.”¹⁹

In his press release of August 31, 1935, President Roosevelt expressed no objection to the purpose of the arms embargo section, which was to preserve the neutrality of the

17. *Public Papers*, IV, 315.

18. *Ibid.*, IV, 440. Isolationists, however, charged the President with making personal efforts to assist the League of Nations by applying at least “moral” motions to Italy, but his announcement of a determination to avoid involvement was clear and positive.

19. *Ibid.*, IV, 346.

United States in foreign wars. On the contrary, he said, "the objective is wholly good." Moreover, in speaking critically of the inflexibility of the section, he did not argue for change on the ground that the President should have discretion to make a discrimination between belligerents and to use the export of munitions to aid one belligerent while applying sanctions against another, as internationalists and sanctionists were advocating. He accepted the major premise on which advocates of neutrality rested their case, for he declared: "It is the *policy* of this government to avoid being drawn into wars between other nations." He also maintained that, owing to the difficulty of foreseeing future contingencies, "It is conceivable that situations may arise in which the wholly inflexible provisions might drag us into war instead of keeping us out." When he spoke of his *policy* of cooperation with other similarly minded governments to promote peace, he attached to his policy the isolationist conditional clause: "*by every peaceable means and without entanglement*" 20

About a month later, on his own motion, in no connection with any particular foreign issue brought officially to his attention, President Roosevelt took special pains, it seems, to reaffirm his policy of abstention from "fierce foreign war." In an address at the San Diego Exposition, October 2, 1935, the President spoke of war perils abroad and then gave the country a solemn assurance: "In the face of this apprehension the American people can have but one concern—the American people can speak but one sentiment: despite what happens in continents overseas, the United States of America shall and must remain, as long ago the Father of our Country prayed that it might remain—unentangled and free. This country seeks no conquest. We have no imperial designs. From day to day and year to year, we are establishing a more perfect assurance of peace with our neighbors. . . . We not

20. (Italics supplied.) For the President's press release and a critical analysis of its meaning and implications, see E. M. Borchard and W. P. Lage, *Neutrality for the United States* (2d ed. Yale University Press, 1940), pp. 315-317.

only earnestly desire peace, but we are moved by a stern determination to avoid those perils that will endanger our peace with the world.”²¹

A determination to keep free from entanglements leading in the direction of war was again expressed by President Roosevelt, in a message to a women’s conference on current questions, October 17, 1935. “In facing the problems involved in a world in which international discord still stalks abroad,” he said, “the vivid interests of women in the preservation of safe peace should be enlisted. Constant vigilance is necessary in a Nation like ours, to see that forces that make for discord are discovered and discouraged. I have pledged myself to do my part in keeping America free of those entanglements that move us along the road to war. I want to feel at all times that I have the sustaining influence of a healthy, sound, and, above all, thoroughly American public opinion on the subject.”²²

Speaking at the Arlington National Cemetery on Armistice Day, November 11, 1935, President Roosevelt, after referring to warlike events and ambitions abroad, said that “we cannot and must not build walls around ourselves and hide our heads in the sand.” But from this truism he drew no internationalist conclusions. Far from it. He dedicated the country to peace, warned youth against the glamour of war, and limited self-defense to self-defense. “The primary purpose of the United States of America,” he said, “is to avoid being drawn into war. . . . The children in our schools, the young men and women passing through our colleges into productive life have, unlike us [of the odder generation], no direct knowledge of the meaning of war. They are not immune to the glamour of war, to the opportunities to escape from the drabness and worry of hard times at home in the glory and heroism of the arms factory and the battlefield, fortunately, there is evidence on every hand that the youth

21. *Public Papers*, IV, 410 f.

22. *Ibid.*, IV, 423.

of America, as a whole, is not trapped by that delusion. They know that elation and prosperity which may come from a new war must lead—for those who survive it—to economic and social collapse more sweeping than any we have experienced in the past.”

After declaring that “we must go forward with all our strength to stress and strive for international peace,” the President added: “In this effort America must and will protect herself. Under no circumstances will this policy of self protection go to lengths beyond self-protection. Aggression on the part of the United States is an impossibility in so far as the present Administration of your Government is concerned. . . . If we as a Nation, by our good example, can contribute to the peaceful well-being of the fellowship of Nations, our course through the years will not have been in vain. . . . The past and the present unite in prayer that America will ever seek the ways of peace, and by her example at home and abroad speed the return of good-will among men.

Among internationalists such Executive pronouncements against intervention in foreign disputes were often treated as unwise or unsound. According to their thesis the United States could not or should not stay out of any major conflict in Europe or Asia. Therefore, their arguments continued, American peace efforts should be directed to preventing such wars by close, official, and vigilant cooperation of the United States with the League of Nations or some other concert of nations. But President Roosevelt had been saying that the United States must consider the security of its own people first, must refrain from political entanglements, should and must keep out of war. At San Diego, on October 2, he had declared that the United States, in the presence of war perils, should and must remain unentangled and free. In so declaring he had arrayed himself specifically on the side of George Washington, whose Farewell Address was the prime

23. *Ibid.*, IV, 441 ff.

document of American foreign policy for isolationists—a dangerous document, in the eyes of internationalists.

Deeply moved by the President's repeated averments that he would avoid political entanglements with the League and shun the road to war, internationalists voiced objections in positive language. One of their leaders, Bishop G. Ashton Oldham of Albany, for example, took the President to task in October, 1935. The Bishop, born in England and educated in the United States, was a member of the English-speaking Union and a member of the Pilgrims of America and was especially concerned about ties with the mother country. He was active in the peace movement: member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Foreign Policy Association, the World Alliance for International Peace, and the Churches and World Peace Association. In his letter to President Roosevelt Bishop Oldham stated that the effort of the fifty-two nations may come to naught if the United States stands aloof—the internationalist formula to the effect that the peace-loving nations of the world could not keep peace unless the United States became a member of the League or some kindred association of governments.

Bishop Oldham's letter posed a problem for President Roosevelt. The President agreed that the best insurance for American peace was to take steps to prevent "all fires." He informed the Bishop that on many occasions the United States had taken such steps, that the United States under his presidency was not standing aloof, and that in a number of respects he had gone beyond actions so far taken by other countries. He reminded Bishop Oldham, however, that it had become "incumbent on me to give first thought to the unquestioned mandate of our people, expressed in recent legislation and in numerous other ways, through the press, through public gatherings and through petitions and letters, that, above all, the United States should not be drawn into the conflict [between Italy and Ethiopia]." He closed this private communication by assuring Bishop Oldham that he

would continue to play the dual role—of attempting to smother fires and of keeping out of war.²⁴

On the basis of President Roosevelt's public and official statements on foreign policy, Francis Brown, Associate Editor of *Current History*, correctly reported, in a review of international affairs for the year 1935: "The American attitude toward Europe throughout 1935 was dominated by the desire to keep out of that continent's turbulent affairs. On this note the year began and ended." That attitude, Mr. Brown said, was not due to the advice of the Founding Fathers against "entangling alliances," nor to perverse unwillingness to cooperate with other nations, nor to intense preoccupation with domestic problems; it was based in part on disillusionment as to the recent World War; "but there was more than memory. Events of the post-war years convinced many Americans, leaders as well as led, that the League of Nations . . . was hardly more than a league of conquerors to enforce an unjust peace."²⁵

By 1936 three of the particular issues in foreign relations thrust upon President Roosevelt in 1933 had, for practical purposes, faded away: the war debts, the Disarmament Conference, and the World Economic Conference. In the Far East, the Manchurian question remained open as a source of perplexity to the State Department. Secretary Hull in various public addresses on international morality adverted to it obliquely without indulging in specifications, but European governments manifested little interest in it and even less inclination to start a war over it. On the other hand, international relations in Europe had gone from bad to worse. Italy had waged a brutal war on Ethiopia. Hitler, having achieved dictatorial power, had gone far on his career of persecuting Jews, socialists, Communists, and liberals, had withdrawn from the League of Nations, and was rearming Germany in defiance of the Versailles Treaty. Great Britain, without the

24. *Ibid.*, IV, 452 f.

25. *American Year Book* (1935), p. 67.

advance consent of France, had made a naval compact with Hitler, also in defiance of the Versailles Treaty. The governments of Europe, great and small, had begun that frenzied scramble for power and safety described trenchantly and ironically in Frederick Schuman's *Europe on the Eve*.

As the months of 1936 passed, the dangers of a general European war grew more evident. Hitler's troops reoccupied the Rhineland in defiance of the Versailles Treaty. The Falangist revolt against the Republican Government in Spain flamed up and spread, sending alarms far and wide. Italy and Germany formed the Rome-Berlin Axis. Japan and Germany established the Anti-Comintern combination — which Italy joined the following year. Meanwhile the British Government, instead of uniting with France and Russia in a bold front against Hitler, was seeking to reach a *modus vi- vendi* with him, if not actually to encourage him in his designs against the Soviet Union. Nothing that President Roosevelt had done so far and was doing in the way of pacification by moral persuasion had produced any visible effect in easing the diplomatic tensions and conflicts of the Old World.

No informed American citizen could be oblivious to the roaring violence across the seas. More than once in the course of the year 1936 President Roosevelt spoke solemnly and extensively of grave disturbances in world affairs but he made no pronouncements which indicated a departure from his previous pledges to avoid political entanglements in Europe and Asia and involvement in the wars of those continents. All his public addresses on the subject in that year, despite numerous references to the perils of war in the world, conformed to the line of the non-entanglement policy he had followed since February 2, 1932.

In his message to Congress, January 3, 1936, the President devoted more than three pages to war dangers in Europe and Asia and expressed the fear that an era of mad scramble for power might return. "We hope," he said, "that we are not again at the threshold of such an era," and immediately de-

dared: "But if face it we must, then the United States and the rest of the Americas can play but one role: through a well-ordered neutrality to do naught to encourage the contest, through adequate defense to save ourselves from embroilment and attack, and through example and all legitimate encouragement and assistance to persuade other Nations to return to the ways of peace and good will." 28

Near the middle of the year, in an address at Dallas, Texas, on June 12, 1936, President Roosevelt took cognizance of the dangers that beset the world and reiterated the doctrine of non-intervention: "As I have said, we seem to understand very well what the problems of the world are. We have, perhaps, a kind of sympathy for their problems. We want to help them all that we can; but they have understood very well in these latter years that help is going to be confined to moral help, and that we are not going to get tangled up with their troubles in the days to come." 27

In accepting the renomination for the presidency at Philadelphia, June 27, 1936, Mr. Roosevelt concentrated his attention entirely on domestic affairs, the recent domestic achievements of his Administration, and the tasks ahead. To foreign policy as such he gave no consideration; but he concluded his address with the lines: "In this world of ours in other lands, there are some people, who, in times past, have lived and fought for freedom, and seem to have grown too weary to carry on the fight. They have sold their heritage of freedom for the illusion of a living. They have yielded their democracy. I believe in my heart that only our success can stir their ancient hope. They begin to know that here in America we are waging a great and successful war. It is not alone a war against want and destitution and economic demoralization. It is more than that; it is a war for the survival

26. *Public Papers*, V, 12. For the nature and history of "the administration" or Senator Pittman's New Neutrality Bill," and for the Neutrality Resolution of 1936, signed by President Roosevelt, see Borchard and Lage, *op. cit.*, p. 274 ff

of democracy. We are fighting to save a great and precious form of government for ourselves and for the world.” 28

Only occasionally during his campaign for reelection did President Roosevelt dwell upon his foreign policy, and only once at length—in his address at Chautauqua on August 14, 1936. In all his other speeches he laid stress upon domestic issues and the necessity of carrying forward the work of domestic reform which he had thus far advanced. If his campaign addresses and other public papers for the year 1936 fully disclosed his hopes and purposes at that time, the building of civilization in America was first and last in his resolve of heart and mind. Furthermore he displayed a determination to refrain from political entanglements in European controversies and maintain peace for the United States.

In the address at Chautauqua, the President dealt broadly with the foreign situation and his own policy respecting it. He began by expressing his concern about the perils of “world conditions.” He reviewed the actions taken under his Administration in giving effect to the good-neighbor policy in this hemisphere. He spoke at length about recent violations of solemn obligations beyond the seas. He laid stress on America’s efforts to cooperate in the reduction of armaments, in the continuance of limitations on naval armaments, and in the “humanitarian” work of the League of Nations. He declared that nations which provoke war forfeit the sympathy of the American people. Then he solemnly warned the country against the thousands of Americans who would, in case a general war came overseas, seek to “break down or evade our neutrality,” in a hunt for profits, “fools’ gold,” in a hope that “America once more would capture the trade of the world.”

With regard to his own sentiments, policy, and measures

28. *Ibid.*, V, 235 f. The Democratic platform of 1936 reaffirmed opposition to war, favored the pacific settlement of disputes among nations, and declared: “We shall continue to observe a true neutrality in the disputes of others; to be prepared resolutely to resist aggression against ourselves; to work for peace and to take the profits out of war; . . .”

relative to foreign perils and foreign wars, President Roosevelt held fast to the line of neutrality and non-involvement:

We shun political commitments which might entangle us in foreign wars; we avoid connection with the political activities of the League of Nations; . . .

We are not isolationists except in so far as we seek to isolate ourselves completely from war. Yet we must remember that so long as war exists on earth there will be some danger that even the Nation which most ardently desires peace may be drawn into war.

I have seen war. I have seen war on land and sea. I have seen blood running from the wounded. I have seen men coughing out their gassed lungs. I have seen the dead in the mud. I have seen cities destroyed. I have seen two hundred limping, exhausted men come out of line—the survivors of a regiment of one thousand that went forward forty-eight hours before. I have seen children starving. I have seen the agony of mothers and wives. I hate war. I have passed unnumbered hours, I shall pass unnumbered hours, thinking and planning how war may be kept from this nation. . . .

The Congress of the United States has given me certain authority to provide safeguards of American neutrality in case of war.

The President of the United States, who, under our Constitution, is vested with primary authority to conduct our international relations, thus has been given new weapons with which to maintain our neutrality.

Nevertheless—and I speak from a long experience—the effective maintenance of American neutrality depends today, as in the past, on the wisdom and determination of whoever at the moment occupy the offices of President and Secretary of State. . . .

No matter how well we are supported by neutrality legislation, we must remember that no laws can be provided to cover every contingency, for it is impossible to imagine how every future event may shape itself. In spite of every possible forethought, international relations involve of necessity a vast uncharted area. In that area safe sailing will depend on the knowledge and the experience and the wisdom of those who

At this late date, with the wisdom which is so easy after the event and so difficult before the event, we find it possible to trace the tragic series of small decisions which led Europe into the Great War in 1914 and eventually engulfed us and many other Nations.

We can keep out of war if those who watch and decide have a sufficiently detailed understanding of international affairs to make certain that the small decisions of each day do not lead to ward war and if, at the same time, they possess the courage to say "no" to those who selfishly or unwisely would let us go to war. 29

' At New York City President Roosevelt closed his campaign of 1936 for reelection on the clarion note of peace for America. After reviewing again the domestic aims of his Administration, he declared: "All this—all these objectives—spell peace at home. All our actions, all our ideals, spell also peace with other nations. Today there is war and rumor of war. We want none of it. . . . You know well that those who stand to profit by war are not on our side in this campaign. 'Peace on earth, good will toward men'—democracy must cling to that message. . . . That is the road to peace." 30

Relying upon the evidence of the year's record, the Vice-President of the Foreign Policy Association, William T. Stone, reported in a review of American foreign policy for 1936: "The desire to avoid involvement in the turbulent affairs of Europe continued to dominate American policy throughout the year 1936. As the swift current of events carried Europe from the Italo-Ethiopian conflict to the Rhineland crisis of March and the civil war in Spain, the Roosevelt Administration struggled to maintain its course of strict neutrality. . . . American public opinion remained predominantly isolationist. . . . Another major crisis [in Europe] served to emphasize once more the extent of American isolation. On March 7, without previous warning,

19. *Ibid.*, V, 285 ff.

20. *Ibid.*, V, 572 f.

Chancellor Hitler announced the occupation by German troops of the Rhineland zone demilitarized by the Versailles Treaty. . . . Throughout the period of diplomatic tension which accompanied the meetings of the League Council in London and Geneva, the United States maintained an attitude of strict detachment, and there was no suggestion from Europe that this country should participate, even informally, in the meetings in London and Geneva.” 31

31. *American Year Book* (1936), pp. 77 f.

CHAPTER VIII

Turn and Return in 1937-1938

Tu mul t uou events, domestic and foreign, marked the course of 1937. The high tension already evident in Washington at the close of 1936 continued to increase rather than abate, from month to month till the end of 1937. President

Roosevelt's program for domestic reform, known as the New Deal, had been practically completed, at least as far as the recent decisions of the Supreme Court had permitted. On February 5, 1937, the President presented to Congress a plan for the reorganization of the judicial branch of the government and thereby precipitated a bitter conflict within his party as well as in the country at large. While that tempest raged other affairs, foreign and domestic, were partly submerged; and this state of turmoil continued until August, 1937, when Congress gave a mortal blow to the President's project for what was called "packing the Supreme Court."

The contest over the reorganization of the judiciary had scarcely come to a conclusion when the promise of recovery and stability tendered by the President's New Deal was confronted by a financial crash almost as swift and terrifying as the panic in the autumn of 1929. As the economic specialist, S. S. Huebner, correctly reported: "During the next three months, however, following August, the market experienced a decline which can only be described as a collapse. The decline in [stock] prices during September, October, and November was not only drastic but also general in its application to all groups of stocks. In fact there are few instances on record where a larger percentage decline has occurred within so short a period of time as three months. . . . Adverse news piled up so plentifully during the last three quarters of 1937 as to undermine the confidence of the investment and

speculative community. Labor unrest of serious proportions confronted nearly all of the nation's basic industries, and resulted in widespread disorganization in production as well as huge financial loss to all concerned." 1

In its range the shock of the economic collapse was startling to President Roosevelt and his advisers. Unemployment continued to be alarming in amount and effects. Labor agitation grew more turbulent. The hostility of the financial community was aggravated. To the Administration, an enlargement of federal spending seemed again necessary as a stimulus to business recovery, and that meant an extension of the "deficit financing" which had for a time been regarded, even by many New Dealers, as a temporary and deplorable expedient. Doubts came to the President and his counselors: perhaps they had been wrong in seeking recovery through the specific measures they had espoused and were at the end of their improvisation. At any rate, in the autumn of 1937 the outlook for the New Deal was discouraging and the discouragement affected all the Administration circles in Washington. The grand dream of 1933 no longer inspired unwavering optimism even among loyal Democrats.

Dark as was the domestic outlook, darker still was the state of affairs abroad. When the year 1937 opened the fury of the civil war in Spain was being accelerated: Germany and Italy were sending armed forces into Spain to aid the rebels; Russia was lending aid to the Loyalists; and volunteers from many countries, including the United States, were pouring into Spain to join in the fight against Spanish, German, and Italian Fascists. Indeed the struggle had the appearance of a frightful dress rehearsal for a coming war in Europe between Fascism and a "united front" of communists, liberals, socialists, and democrats. In July Japan began an undeclared war on China, setting the Orient aflame again, and threatening all the Occidental interests in that part of the world.

Meanwhile, with reference to the European convulsion',

1. *American Year Book* (1937), p. 366.

and the new Sino-Japanese War, diplomatic maneuverings kept the chancelleries of the world in uproar and supplied the American press with sensational news of wars and war rumors. Mere observers commanding no “inside” information were reasonably certain that Hitler meant war and that despite efforts to “appease” him, he would spring the war when he was ready.²

As far as public pronouncements during the first nine months of 1937 were concerned, however, President Roosevelt indicated to the country no change in the policy of non entanglement in the political maneuverings of the great foreign powers, whether in the League of Nations or outside, which he had reiterated so many times since February 2, 1932. Nor did he reverse the opinion, likewise often restated, that the United States could and should stay out of the war when it came.

His second Inaugural Address, in January, contained no passage on foreign affairs and the probability of American involvement in the war. On the contrary it displayed a resolve to grapple with domestic issues yet unsettled—issues presented in his own description: “one-third of a Nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished.” In his address at the Democratic victory dinner, March 4, 1937, the President expressed the desire to turn over to his successor on January 20, 1941, “a Nation intact, a Nation at peace, a Nation prosperous, a Nation clear in its knowledge of what powers it has to serve its own citizens, a Nation that is in a position to use those powers to the full in order to move forward steadily to meet the modern needs of humanity. . . .”³

2. For example, in an article in *Foreign Affairs* for April, 1936, on “Education under the Nazis,” I wrote: “Turned in upon themselves, nourishing deep resentments, and lashed to fury by a militant system of education, the German people are conditioned for that day when Hitler, his technicians, and the army are ready and are reasonably sure of the prospects of success in a sudden and devastating attack, East or West. To cherish any other conception of Hitler’s fate or of the aims of German education is to cherish a delusion.”

3. *Public Papers*, 1937 Vol. (The Macmillan Company, 1941), p. 115.

But while President Roosevelt publicly announced no reversal of his non-entanglement *policy* with regard to European political affairs, he took many *actions* which to members of Congress and private observers had the appearance of a resolve to abandon neutrality in favor of intervention in European and Asiatic conflicts. This is no place to review all those actions; nor until the diplomatic archives of all the Great Powers are opened, if ever, will it be possible to discover the various forms and ramifications of those actions. A few examples, however, will indicate reasons for the growing fear that the President's measures, as distinguished from his published statements of policy, were carrying the United States along "the road to war."

Early in the year certain steps taken by the Roosevelt Administration in respect of the Spanish Civil War offered a test of his policy. In some relations, it was known, the Administration was cooperating with the Non-Intervention Committee at London—a committee formed under British leadership for the general purpose of "localizing" the Spanish Civil War, keeping it from spreading to a general war. When the party conflicts in Spain had burst out in civil war, in the summer of 1936, the State Department had gone beyond the rule of strict neutrality and beyond the terms of the law; it had tried to discourage the sale of arms by American citizens to belligerents in Spain. Although the Department knew that the embargo provisions of the existing Neutrality Act did not apply to civil war, it continued to warn American citizens against shipping arms to the belligerents in Spain including the Spanish Republican Government then officially recognized by the Government of the United States. In January, 1937, President Roosevelt sought to make interference with arms shipments "legal," by asking Congress for a special act to authorize applying the embargo on "arms, munitions, and implements of war" to civil wars—in effect, to the Spanish Republican Government as well as to the Fascist rebels against the Spanish Republic. On January 9, 1937, this Act was signed and became law.

On its surface the new embargo law had the appearance of non-intervention. But in fact it was more than that. In the first place, it was a blow at the Republican Government of Spain, for Germany and Italy were notoriously supplying munitions to the Spanish Fascists in rebellion against the Republic and were aiding them with armed forces. In the second place the Act violated an established rule of international law that a neutral country should not change its legislation after a war had broken out, in such a way as to discriminate materially against a lawful belligerent. In the third place, it transgressed the terms of the Treaty of Madrid consummated in 1901 between the United States and Spain. In the fourth place, it played into the hands of Great Britain, then nominally neutral in the Spanish War but actually pursuing measures injurious to the recognized Government of Spain. In the fifth place, whether or not it materially aided in the destruction of the Republican Government in Spain, it was followed by the victory of the Falangist and Fascist rebels in that country and the installation as dictator of Francisco Franco, to whom President Roosevelt accorded official recognition with a celerity that was astounding in view of his professed attachment to democratic principles.⁴

Another illustration of President Roosevelt's apparent shift in the direction of intervention in foreign controversies occurred in connection with the Sino-Japanese War that began on July 7, 1937. The Neutrality Act of May 1, 1937, had made it mandatory on the President to embargo the shipment of arms and other materials *when he found* a state of war existing abroad. What appeared to be a war and was in fact a war continued to rage in China after July 7. It was expected in many quarters that he would *find* it to be a war, proclaim American neutrality, and embargo the sale of munitions and other articles of war use to belligerents in the

4. For the principle of "recognition" in the historic policy of the United States and for President Roosevelt's adherence to the non-recognition doctrine in the case of Japanese aggression in Manchukuo, see above, pp. 144 ff.

bargo; and in July, 1937, the State Department issued a manifesto to sixty governments of the world on the sanctity of treaties and international law. Thus the State Department suggested to citizens with long memories that the Administration was preparing to "implement" the Stimson doctrine to which the President had obliquely subscribed on January 9, 1933-8

More than one newspaper and magazine treated President Roosevelt's decisions in the case of the Spanish Civil War and the Sino-Japanese War as disclosing an intention to abandon his non-entanglement policy. Knowing the public concern over what had the semblance of a new line in American foreign policy, Spencer Brodneyn, editor of *Events*, a monthly review of world affairs, invited me to write an article for his journal on the subject "Will Roosevelt Keep Us Out of War?" In response I prepared the article, which was published in *Events* for July, 1937. I had been in Washington during the winter of 1936-37 and had followed as closely as I could the trends of opinion at the national capital. After a brief review of some recent tendencies which seemed to indicate a shift in the President's intentions, I concluded: "Taking these considerations together, the American people may well prepare themselves to see President Roosevelt plunge the country into the European war, when it comes, far more quickly than did President Wilson."

This article was followed by another prepared in July and published in the August issue of *Events*. In the second article, after referring to ominous events in Europe I said: "Beyond the Atlantic is the United States, also arming rapidly, with plans for landing a four-million army 'somewhere' off the American continent. On the whole President Roosevelt has made no open commitments. But his sympathies are so well known as to need no documentation. There is also a configuration of war sympathies in the United States. It ranges from professional peace advocates who support the Entente's League of Nations, through Conservatives who think that

war would be a good thing for the country, to Stalinites who are bent on 'saving Russian democracy.' ” 8

On his own motion, without my knowledge, Mr. Brodney sent copies of my two articles to President Roosevelt, accompanied by a letter in which he suggested that the President would render a great public service if he “would make a statement to the American people that would set their minds at ease on a matter about which there is doubt and suspicion.” In reply Stephen Early, the President’s secretary, informed Mr. Brodney that “the President is grateful to you for writing as you did,” and added: “For your information I am enclosing herewith copies of two addresses delivered by the President, one at Chautauqua, New York, and the other at San Diego, California.” In the copies sent to Mr. Brodney the passages dealing with “our national determination to keep free from foreign wars and foreign entanglements” were marked. Mr. Early also assured Mr. Brodney that “*these formal and -public pronouncements of the President still clearly and definitely set forth his views on the subject about which you write.*” 1

Thus in August, 1937, President Roosevelt, in response to a direct question, guaranteed his continued adherence to the non-intervention policy so often emphasized in his public addresses since February 2, 1932, never more positively and explicitly than in the Chautauqua and San Diego speeches.

6. At this time the Communist line was “a united front against Fascism.” A representative of the Soviet Embassy in Washington called on me at my hotel in the winter of 1937-38 and argued at great length that a war of the United States against Japan would in no way partake of an imperialist character, would in fact serve the cause of “democracy” throughout the world. I was somewhat perturbed when I showed him a dossier of Communist writings from previous years, denouncing the operations of the United States in the Far East as “imperialistic” aggressions against exploited peoples, and contrasted them with writings of the new line—“The united front against Fascism.”

7. (Italics supplied.) Mr. Brodney’s letter to President Roosevelt, Mr. Early’s reply, the pertinent extracts from the San Diego and Chautauqua addresses, and my rejoinder appear in *Events* for September, 1937. For these extracts, see above, pp. 166, 174.

A few weeks elapsed. Then suddenly at Chicago, on October 5, 1937, the President delivered, in a tone of decisive solemnity, an address on the world situation in which he discarded the doctrine of neutrality for the United States and espoused the idea of collective security—the cardinal principle of internationalism. He spoke with feeling about the “present reign of terror and international lawlessness,” forecast more frightful scenes, declared that in such circumstances America could not expect mercy or escape from attack, and called for united action against aggressors on the part of the 90 per cent of the world’s population that cherished peace, freedom, and security.

After reviewing recent destruction of life and property in wars raging abroad and quoting from an author’s description of frightfulness impending, President Roosevelt said:

If those things come to pass in other parts of the world, let no one imagine that America will escape, that America may expect mercy, that this Western Hemisphere will not be attacked and that it will continue tranquilly and peacefully to carry on the ethics and the arts of civilization.

If those days come “there will be no safety by arms, no help from authority, no answer in science. The storm will rage till every flower of culture is trampled and all human beings are leveled in a vast chaos.”

If those days are not to come to pass—if we are to have a world in which we can breathe freely and live in amity without fear—the peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort to uphold laws and principles on which alone peace can rest secure.

The peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort in opposition to those violations of treaties and those ignorings of humane instincts which today are creating a state of international anarchy and instability from which there is no escape through mere isolation or neutrality.

Those who cherish their freedom and recognize and respect the equal right of their neighbors to be free and live in peace, must work together for the triumph of law and moral principles in order that peace, justice, and confidence may

There must be a return to a belief in the pledged word, in the value of a signed treaty. There must be recognition of the fact that national morality is as vital as private morality.

A bishop wrote me the other day:

It seems to me that something greatly needs to be said in behalf of ordinary humanity against the present practice of carrying the horrors of war to helpless civilians, especially women and children.

It may be that such a protest might be regarded by many, who claim to be realists, as futile, but may it not be that the heart of mankind is so filled with horror at the present needless suffering that that force could be mobilized in sufficient volume to lessen such cruelty in the days ahead?

Even though it may take twenty years, which God forbid, for civilization to make effective its corporate protest against this barbarism, surely strong voices may hasten the day.

There is a solidarity and interdependence about the modern world, both technically and morally, which makes it impossible for any nation completely to isolate itself from economic and political upheavals in the rest of the world, especially when such upheavals appear to be spreading and not declining.

There can be no stability or peace either within nations or between nations except under laws and moral standards adhered to by all. International anarchy destroys every foundation for peace. It jeopardizes either the immediate or the future security of every nation, large or small.

It is, therefore, a matter of vital interest and concern to the people of the United States that the sanctity of international treaties and the maintenance of international morality be restored.

The overwhelming majority of the peoples and nations of the world today want to live in peace.

They seek the removal of barriers against trade.

They want to exert themselves in industry, in agriculture and in business, that they may increase their wealth through the production of wealth-producing goods rather than striving to produce military planes and bombs and machine guns and cannon for the destruction of human lives and useful property.

the population of the world is being jeopardized by the remaining ten per cent who are threatening a breakdown of all international order and law. Surely the ninety per cent who want to live in peace under law and in accordance with moral standards that have received almost universal acceptance through the centuries, can and must find some way to make their will prevail.

The situation is definitely of universal concern. The questions involved relate not merely to violations of specific provisions of particular treaties; they are questions of war and of peace, of international law and especially of principles of humanity. It is true that they involve definite violations of agreements, and especially of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Briand- Kellogg Pact, and the Nine Power Treaty. But they also involve problems of world economy, world security and world humanity.

It is true that the moral consciousness of the world must recognize the importance of removing injustices and well-founded grievances; but at the same time it must be aroused to the cardinal necessity of honoring sanctity of treaties, of respecting the rights and liberties of others and of putting an end to acts of international aggression.

It seems to be unfortunately true that the epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading.

When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease.

It is my determination to pursue a policy of peace. It is my determination to adopt every practicable measure to avoid involvement in war. It ought to be inconceivable that in this modern era, and in the face of experience, any nation could be so foolish and ruthless as to run the risk of plunging the whole world into war by invading and violating, in contravention of solemn treaties, the territory of other nations that have done them no real harm and are too weak to protect themselves adequately. Yet the peace of the world and the welfare and security of every nation, including our own is today being threatened by that very thing.

No nation which refuses to exercise forbearance and to
respeci

retain the confidence and respect of other nations. No nation ever loses its dignity or its good standing by conciliating its differences, and by exercising great patience with, and consideration for, the rights of other nations.

War is a contagion, whether it be declared or undeclared. It can engulf states and peoples remote from the original scene of hostilities. We are determined to keep out of war, yet we cannot insure ourselves against the disastrous effects of war and the dangers of involvement. We are adopting such measures as will minimize our risk of involvement but we cannot have complete protection in a world of disorder in which confidence and security have broken down.

If civilization is to survive the principles of the Prince of Peace must be restored. Trust between nations must be revived.

Most important of all, the will for peace on the part of peace-loving nations must express itself to the end that nations that may be tempted to violate their agreements and the rights of others will desist from such a course. There must be positive endeavors to preserve peace. America hates war. America hopes for peace. Therefore, America actively engages in the search for peace.⁸

The “quarantine speech” at Chicago fell upon the country like a bolt from the blue. Internationalists greeted it with rejoicing as conclusive evidence that President Roosevelt had at last spurned, in the name of the United States, the principle of non-entanglement and non-intervention in the political and military operations of European and Asiatic powers, and had aligned himself on the side of full cooperation with “peace-loving” nations in designating and taking collective action against the aggressors—Germany, Italy, and Japan. With this interpretation of the speech isolationists agreed, but they criticized the President in blunt language. They accused him of having violated the pledges he had repeatedly made to the people and charged him with setting out on “the road to war.” They alleged that he was trying to divert atten

8. *Public Papers*, 1937 Vol., pp. 408 ff.

and demands for clarification were heard throughout the nation.

President Roosevelt was annoyed by the outcry which immediately followed his Chicago speech. Writing nearly four years afterward, on July 10, 1941, he said of his quarantine proposal: "Unfortunately, this suggestion fell upon deaf ears

—even hostile and resentful ears. . . . It was hailed as war mongering; it was condemned as attempted intervention in foreign affairs; it was even ridiculed as a nervous search 'under the bed' for dangers of war which did not exist." ¶ When the President met the journalists in a press conference on October 6, 1937, the day after the Chicago speech, he seemed bewildered by the outburst of discussion, approval, and disapproval that he had called forth.¹⁰

As soon as the subject of the quarantine speech was broached at the conference, President Roosevelt declined to say anything for publication and insisted that he could only speak "off the record," adding that he did not want to say anything "for background." He was asked to state what type of measure in respect of quarantining he had in mind and how he reconciled that proposal with the Neutrality Act. His reply was a citation of the last line in the Chicago speech: "Therefore America actively engages in the search for peace."

Bent on forcing the issue, a journalist inquired: "But you also said that the peace-loving nations can and must find a way to make their wills prevail." The President's comment was: "Yes?" The following exchange then took place:

Q. And you were speaking, as I interpreted it, you were speaking of something more than moral indignation. That is preparing the way for collaborative—

THE PRESIDENT. Yes?

Q. Is anything contemplated? Have you moved?

the president. No; just the speech itself.

9. Introduction to *Public Papers*, 1939 Vol., p. xxviii.

10. For this description I am indebted to a distinguished journalist of New

Q. Yes, but how do you reconcile that? Do you accept the fact that is a repudiation of the neutrality—

the president. Not for a minute. It may be an expansion.

Q. Is that for use?

the president. All off the record.

The President was then asked whether the quarantine doctrine did not mean “economic sanctions anyway.” He turned the query aside, saying: “No, not necessarily. Look, ‘sanctions’ is a terrible word to use. They are all out of the window.”¹¹ Unable to make any advance along that line, the questioner took another: “Right. Let’s not call it that. Let’s call it concert of action on the part of peace-loving nations. Is that going to be brought into play?” The President parried: “. . . We are looking for some way to peace . . . The journalist thereupon wanted to know whether there was likely to be a conference of peace-loving nations, and was informed by the President: “No; conferences are out of the window. You never get anywhere with a conference. . . . We are looking for a program.”

Determined if possible to discover what practical actions or measures the President had in mind as a means of giving effect to the quarantine doctrine, the questioner started the following discussion:

Q. Wouldn’t it be almost inevitable, if any program is reached, that our present Neutrality Act will have to be overhauled?

the president. Not necessarily. That is the interesting thing.

Q. That is very interesting.

Q. You say there isn’t any conflict between what you outline and the Neutrality Act. They seem to be on opposite poles to me and your assertion does not enlighten me.

the president. Put your thinking-cap on, Ernest [Lindley].

Q. I have been [thinking] for some years. They seem to be at opposite poles. How can you be neutral if you are going to align yourself with one group of nations?

11. This seemed to be a repudiation of sanctions such as Secretary Stimson had advocated. Above, pp. 134 ff,

the president. What do you mean, 'aligning'? You mean a treaty?

Q. Not necessarily. I mean action on the part of peace-loving nations.

the president. There are a lot of methods in the world that have never been tried yet.

Q. But, at any rate, that is not an indication of neutral attitude — 'quarantine the aggressors' and 'other nations of the world.'

After some side play a journalist asked the blunt question: "Is a 'quarantine' a sanction?" The President's reply was: "No." Then came another blunt question: "Are you excluding any coercive action? Sanction is coercive." The President answered: "That is exactly the difference." As if to drive the President into admitting that his quarantine doctrine belonged merely in the realm of moral appeal, a journalist immediately remarked: "Better, then, to keep it in a moral sphere?"¹² This the President refused to grant, for he replied: "No; it can be a very practical sphere." With these words the conference was brought to an end, leaving the journalists, as one of them remarked to the writer of these lines a short time afterward, "up in the air."¹³

If the upshot of the press conference seemed to be confusion, two remarks by the President gave an inkling that he had something definite in contemplation. The first was: "There are a lot of methods in the world that have never been tried yet." And the second was to the effect that he had some plan in mind: "I can't give you any clue to it. You will have to invent one. *I have got one.*" (Italics supplied.)

Was this the point in time at which President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull decided that it was necessary to turn the nation away from isolationism as expressed in the

12. This was President Hoover's conception of the non-recognition policy to which Mr. Stimson attached sanctions and coercion. Above, pp. 134 ff.

13. For the stenographic account of this press conference, *Public Papers*, 1937 Vol., 414 ff.

Act and toward definite collaboration with the peace-loving nations as against the aggressors?¹⁴ If it was, no information to that effect was given to the country in October, 1937; and furthermore, again and again after October 6, 1937, both the President and the Secretary proclaimed to the country their adherence to the doctrine of neutrality and non-entanglement for the United States.¹⁵

For many days after October 5, 1937, journalists studied the language of the quarantine speech and tried to work out its meaning in terms of some new policy—some principle of action that, in the nature of things, marked a departure from the policy of neutrality hitherto maintained. The *New York Times* reported on October 7, 1937, that the President “steadfastly refused to amplify” the Chicago address. The *New York Herald Tribune*, on the same day, was of the opinion that some passages in the quarantine speech “challenged the effectiveness of neutrality as a safeguard of peace and proposed a collective ‘quarantine’ of aggressor nations”; but it recorded that such information as had been gleaned from sources near to the President left “only a confused picture,” although one of the President’s “lieutenants” admitted “a marked deviation from the Congressional policy.” At the same time the *Herald Tribune* attributed to another “source” the statement that the President had in mind a scheme for keeping the United States neutral while cooperating with the peace-loving nations in restraining aggressors—a scheme for applying effective restraints and at the same time avoiding entanglement in “economic or military sanctions.”

On October 9, 1937, a reporter for the *Herald Tribune* suggested a possible key to the riddle of the President’s meaning, plan, or “method.” The article in question described the President as “playing his cards close to his chest and . . . deliberately leaving much to conjecture,” and it interpreted some of his “hints” to indicate that he was planning to use the

14. See above, pp. 33 f.

15. See below, Chaps. IX and X.

Neutrality Act against Japan in conjunction with the application of economic sanctions to Japan by other important nations. Another conjecture, also based on "presidential hints," was that President Roosevelt might combine with certain foreign governments in applying the principles of the Neutrality Act to the whole war area wherever it might be. If this was indeed the "method" the President had in mind at his press conference on October 6, 1937, it came to nothing.

In the city of Washington rumor was rife. Administration officials were reticent. Suppositions relative to the long-range meaning of the Chicago speech were anxiously discussed. Hope that the President would soon clear up the confusion by an amplification of his quarantine proposal was freely expressed.¹⁶ Among observers acquainted with the history of diplomacy and war, it was generally recognized that effective cooperation with other nations against an aggressor anywhere would lead the United States into political entanglements and very probably on the way to war.

October 9, 1937, the *New York Times*, in a front-page report, disclosed the fact that on the previous day President Roosevelt held "intensive discussions" with his cabinet and chief advisers in foreign affairs; and that they took under consideration the Far Eastern crisis "in the light of the new American policy of international collaboration for peace." But the White House and the State Department were unwilling to make "any announcement" about the next steps, if any, that had been devised. In such circumstances, the *Times* reported, the condemnation of Japan by the League of Nations and the United States left the "status of the problem" uncertain.

Contrary to expectations, President Roosevelt in his "fire side chat" of October 12, just after his proclamation calling Congress into a special session, offered no elucidation of his Chicago address in any concrete terms. He devoted nearly all the "chat" to domestic issues. Near the end of his broadcast he spoke of the coming conference of the parties to the

Nine-Power Treaty of 1922, of American participation in it, and of “our purpose to cooperate with the other signatories to this Treaty, including China and Japan.” Such cooperation, he explained, would be an example “of one of the possible paths to follow in our search for means toward peace throughout the whole world.” To this he added a brief comment on decencies in the intercourse of nations.

In only one passage of his “chat” did the President attempt to satisfy public curiosity as to what he definitely proposed to do in the crisis, and even that passage was negative rather than informative. “Meanwhile,” he remarked, “remember that from 1913 to 1921, I personally was fairly close to world events, and in that period, while I learned much of what to do, I also learned much of what not to do.”

Since this statement referred to his service as Assistant Secretary of the Navy during President Wilson’s Administration, it could be interpreted to mean that he did not propose to follow exactly in President Wilson’s steps. But that was a negative inference. President Roosevelt’s inner decision as to a positive program of action, if he had made one, remained hidden to the public.

As if to quiet his fellow citizens who might be worried lest his efforts to block the Japanese in China and his collaboration with European powers might lead to war after all, (he President closed his “chat” by saying: “The common sense, the intelligence of Americans agree with my statement [at Chicago] that ‘America hates war. America hopes for peace. Therefore, America actively engages in the search for peace.’”¹⁷

Instead of allaying speculations regarding his intentions and purposes in foreign affairs, the President’s broadcast raised new doubts and questions. According to a report from Washington, “diplomatic circles” saw in the chat no retreat from the Chicago speech but they agreed that, “for several reasons, he had softened the tone.” It was thought that “he wished to reassure the people in this country, who

agitated over his Chicago speech,” and also to reassure “other governments and particularly Japan. Therefore he purposely minimized reference to foreign questions. . . . His disposition appears to be to do nothing that would encourage Congressional action or agitation, especially as the nine-power treaty conference will probably be in session at about the time Congress convenes.” 18

Arthur Krock, experienced journalist, always in close contact with inside sources of information, like members of “diplomatic circles,” found no clarification in the fireside chat. Commenting on the subject, Mr. Krock declared that in his Chicago speech “Mr. Roosevelt had mystified his own people and those abroad by referring to a ‘quarantine’ against treaty-breakers,” and that there had been “some expectation that he would clarify his use of this disturbing word” in his broadcast of October 12. The expectation had not been met: “in his fireside chat he contented himself with announcing what the newspapers had already made known—that the United States stands ready to meet with other Powers signatory to the Nine-Power Treaty. And the rest of what he said about the march to peace, as directed by the United States, was a mere restatement, in far softer terms, of what he had already conveyed by radio at Chicago.” 19

Although journalists were no more eager than many of their fellow citizens to find out how the President could hope to “quarantine” powerful nations without resorting to strong measures likely to involve the country in war, they had opportunities to inquire, which were not vouchsafed to other persons, even Members of Congress. And they did inquire, again, during a press conference on October 15, 1937.²⁰

At this conference the President was asked whether it was “fair” to infer from the fireside chat that the country would offer its services in mediation. He answered, “that was what

18. *New York Times*, October 14, 1937.

19. *Ibid.*, October 14, 1937.

he had said.” But he did not amplify the remark; and “to all other questions as to the foreign situation Mr. Roosevelt saw fit to return completely uninformative replies. . . .” He was asked whether he would call upon Congress to revise the neutrality laws in line with the apparent reversal of previous policy embodied in his Chicago speech. His response was that “he could not discuss the matter.” 21

The remainder of the *New York Times* report on the press conference of October 15, 1937, gave no definite information on the foreign policy the country was supposed to be pursuing:

The President, speaking with some emphasis, then told the reporters that he hoped they would make it clear that any predictions of United States foreign policy must be pure guesswork, emphasizing that he did not know what it would be himself.

However, there are some indications that Mr. Roosevelt has some plan in mind that he thinks will be an effective “quarantine” against treaty-breakers and aggressor nations and at the same time not involve this country in political or economic sanctions, or in actual military demonstrations.

Just what his plan is Mr. Roosevelt has never demonstrated or even indicated but some of those close to him believe that he has a plan that he thinks will be effective.

That that plan does not involve any policies followed by the Administration of which he was a member during the last war is assumed by some who remember his remark in his radio address Tuesday night that as a member of the Wilson Administration he had learned what not to do.

There are also some indications that Mr. Roosevelt does not regard the policy of “quarantine” by “concerted action” as outlined in his Chicago speech as inconsistent with the neutrality policy of Congress as laid down in the present Neutrality Law

and has even thought that action may be taken under the new policy without any change in the present law, which appears to most observers to enjoin complete impartiality as to the treatment of warring nations regardless of opinion as to the guilty party

the President since the Chicago speech that he feels he has some new way to meet the situation—a way that has never been tried before. But there has been no clue as to just what that way

The account of the same press conference given in the *New York Herald Tribune* added a few details to the *Times* report. The President was asked what he proposed to do if his efforts to “mediate” between China and Japan proved to be a failure. This was a searching question that sought to discover his next steps, in case peaceful negotiations came to nothing, and force—national or collective—appeared to be the only alternative to a confused retreat. The President “said this was an ‘if’ question and, besides, it was utter, sheer guess work for anyone to try to say now what America’s policy would be in the future.” To this climax Mr. Roosevelt added a super-climax by saying to his questioners “that if he were a newspaper correspondent he would go out and play golf in stead of trying to make news when there wasn’t any.”²³

In the clashes of the discussion as reflected in the daily and weekly press all over the country immediately after the quarantine speech of October 5, 1937, certain divisions and confusions of opinion were manifest.

Internationalists greeted the speech as revealing a definite reversal of policy on the part of the President and applauded it; but they were cautious and uncertain in respect of suggesting to the President ways and means of “implementing” his new policy. In general they laid stress on the effectiveness of collective action if vigorously applied to the governments designated as aggressors; but they were diffident, and refrained from emphasizing the primary point of their doctrine: “moral” and “economic” sanctions are futile unless backed by adequate armed force and, if necessary, by war against the designated aggressors.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *New York Herald Tribune*, October 16, 1937.

Some internationalists, even so, maintained that the United States could apply moral and economic sanctions to “aggressors,” on its own motion or in conjunction with other “peace-loving” nations, without incurring the risk of war, without assuming an obligation to go to war in case these measures failed to overcome the aggressors against whom they were directed. Those who took this position could therefore applaud the quarantine proposal on the theory that President Roosevelt might stop the Sino-Japanese War and prevent war in Europe by some hitherto untested expedient, while keeping the United States out of war in any pinch.

This conception of policy—coercion and discrimination without incurring a risk of war—was set forth later in a letter from Marguerite Wells, President of the League of Women Voters, addressed to President Roosevelt in connection with the Lend-Lease Bill providing for all-out aid to the powers at war with the Axis.²⁴ “The League’s position on foreign policy for almost twenty years,” Miss Wells stated to the President, “has been consistently against the idea that isolation is possible; so long as wars exist in the world, they will threaten us; the United States should help develop some sort of collective system based on law and order. More recently as such a system has failed to materialize, the League of Women Voters has favored ‘A foreign policy as a non belligerent which permits discrimination against an aggressor and favors the victim of aggression.’” In the same letter Miss Wells notified President Roosevelt: “Basic to our support is acceptance of your own assurance that your policy is not directed toward war, but that its sole purpose is to keep war away from us.”

As a rule, however, members of the anti-war bloc maintained that there was no middle ground, that the United States could not depart from neutrality as recognized in international law without a definite risk of war, and that the quarantine doctrine, if actually applied, meant nothing more nor less than setting out on the road to war. Hence they

24. Letter dated February 28, 1941.

spoke and wrote in unequivocal language against it. Public opinion at the time appeared to be arrayed on their side. On the basis of various popular polls taken in the preceding months, it had been reported that about three fourths of the people were opposed to getting into another world war. Indeed in April, 1937, 71 per cent of the persons polled had answered that they thought it had been a mistake for the United States to become embroiled in the first World War.² The out-and-out advocates of neutrality for the United States condemned the quarantine speech and declared that attempts to apply it would be more than steps on the way to war with Japan and the other Axis Powers; would be in fact acts of war.

Each of the principal parties to the great dispute had support from interested quarters. Communists, traveling along the Moscow line and now engaged in working up "popular front" against all "Fascists," lustily joined the internationalists in cheering the quarantine speech and calling for action against the aggressors. Meanwhile on the side of non intervention were German and Italian propagandists employed in enlisting American support for the cause of Hitler and Mussolini. To intensify the controversy, certain powerful journals, while isolationist in respect of Europe, were imperialist in respect of Asia and ready to welcome a war against Japan.

A defender of internationalism and the doctrine that the United States must join Great Britain in preventing any single power from becoming dominant on the continent of Europe, the *New York Times*, on October 6, gave the quarantine speech a warm reception. It declared "unassailable" the President's conclusion that "the only effective assurance of peace is a 'concerted effort' to avert the outbreak of war itself and to uphold the sanctity of treaties." It invited the President to "clarify" the question whether he intended to take a "specific line of action" or was stating general principles.

25. Walter Johnson, *The Battle against Isolation*, p. 19.

Two days later the *Times* informed the President editorially that if “the new policy outlined in the Chicago speech” was to become the policy of the United States, the Neutrality Act should be removed from the statute books, that he must be prepared to face the formidable opposition in Congress, that he must be ready to argue his case for “concerted action” at the bar of public opinion, that he must undertake to convince the nation that its “honor” and “enlightened self-interest” required it to accept a larger share of its responsibilities as “a great world power.”²⁶

In many parts of the country the quarantine speech met similar approval. The *Raleigh* [North Carolina] *News and Observer* proclaimed it a statement of “fact” and applauded it as a return to the position taken long before by Woodrow Wilson.²⁷ The *Cincinnati Enquirer* greeted it as a definite sign that the President “is determined to do more than merely speak against aggression.”²⁸ Congratulation came from the *Christian Science Monitor*: “The time for Americans to get into the fight is before it begins. And that is the surest way to keep out.”²⁹ The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* lauded the speech as “definitely” aligning the President with Woodrow Wilson’s “viewpoint” as against “isolationist policies.”³⁰ In San Francisco the *Chronicle* hailed it as a warning against isolation and neutrality.³¹ To the chorus of praise the *Baltimore Sun* contributed its approbation.³²

On the front page of the *Foreign Policy Bulletin* for October 15, 1937, Raymond Leslie Buell, head of the Foreign Policy Association in New York, praised the quarantine speech under the caption: “Roosevelt Abandons Isolation.”³³ Buell found in it a rejection of the isolationist philosophy, but inquired whether it was “intended as another ‘moral gesture’ ” or was to be backed by “a positive foreign

16. *New York Times*, October 8, 1937.

17. Quoted in *New York Herald Tribune*, October 6, 1937, p. 3.

18. Quoted in *New York Times*, October 6, 1937, p. 17.

19. *Ibid.*, October 7, 1937, p. 20.

20. Quoted in *New York Times*, October 6, 1937, p. 17.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Quoted in *New York Herald Tribune*, October 6, 1937, p. 3.

policy.” He advised President Roosevelt to refrain from applying the Neutrality Act to the war in the Far East as long as this was “legally” possible and, in case the Act could not be amended soon, as was likely, to prepare for “a Japanese declaration of war” by attempting to coordinate the provisions of the Neutrality Act with the action of the League powers in such a way as to produce an international shipping embargo. Only in this fashion, Mr. Buell thought, could the United States “escape from becoming a virtual ally of Japan.”

In the “Washington News Letter” printed in the *Foreign Policy Bulletin* of the same date, a Washington observer said that the State Department had escaped from “an air of tin reality, a pleasant complacency, as though we lived in a quaint Alice-in-Wonderland world.” With evident satisfaction he welcomed the signs of a new day: “We are in the game of Power Politics. From now on, whether we like it or not, we will be compelled to play the game. The American people have an important stake in whether it is played well, or badly.”

The *Nation* heartily endorsed President Roosevelt’s quarantine plea and rejoiced that the public reaction to the speech was “amazingly friendly.” It declared that the principal objection had come from “the die-hard isolationists and from the Hearst press,” and manifested delight in the fact that the President had “definitely” chosen the path of opposition to treaty breaking and aggression. After remarking that isolationists fought shy of collective measures against aggression, “on the ground that they might lead to war,” the *Nation* assured its readers that “for such fears there is no reasonable justification.” On the contrary, it went on to say, “Japan is far too deeply involved in its adventure in China to dream of waging war against a major power, to say nothing of a general war against all the democratic nations. The real danger of war, as Mr. Roosevelt has so clearly pointed out, lies in the opposite direction.” 33

33. October 16, 1937, pp. 391-392.

Writing in the same issue of the *Nation*, Oswald Garrison Villard expressed regret that President Roosevelt had not used “the words *Japan* and *Italy*” in his quarantine speech, but overlooked the lapse and contended that “if he goes no further, he has rendered a tremendous service to the world. His words will be acclaimed by liberals and peace-lovers wherever they are read. . . .” Incidentally, Mr. Villard revealed the fact that he had some weeks previously telegraphed the President, urging him to speak out on foreign affairs and “to reassume the moral leadership of the world which Woodrow Wilson abandoned when he surrendered to the ‘peacemakers’ at Paris.”

Prominent leaders of the “peace movement” in the United States joined in applauding the quarantine speech. For example, James G. McDonald, formerly head of the Foreign Policy Association and at the moment member of the *Times* editorial staff, hailed it as marking a return of President Roosevelt to internationalism. Apparently having some special information, Mr. McDonald averred that “the President’s speech was carefully prepared for weeks, and should be considered as an expression of a new foreign policy being formulated by the State Department.”³⁴

Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University and head of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, commended the quarantine speech, called for his international police to maintain world order, and deplored the notion that such use of force involved war. Disposing of the opposition swiftly, Dr. Butler asserted that the “folly” of isolation was exceeded only by its “immorality,” and thus drew the line of conflict in opinion between wisdom and morality on his side and folly and immorality on the other

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Earl Browder, general secretary of the Communist party

34. *New York Times*, October 14, 1937, p. 16. This confirmed the view of Hew Pearson, *The Nation*, October 16, 1937, to the effect that the speech had been planned weeks in advance.”

15. *New York Times*, November 12, 1937.

in America, united his plaudits with those of Dr. Butler, Mr. McDonald, and Mr. Villard in acclaiming the quarantine speech. At that time Communists were following the Moscow line of collaboration with "bourgeois" elements in forming a "popular front" against "Fascism." Mr. Browder followed suit. He welcomed President Roosevelt's repudiation of neutrality and promised him "100 per cent unconditional support of the Communist party," if he would let Communists work out things for themselves. "We have been the bitterest critics of Mr. Roosevelt's foreign policy in the past," Mr. Browder said. "His neutrality was unneutral and hypocritical and was designed to help Fascist nations in war. Now we are glad to see it change." 38

Two days after Mr. Browder had spoken, the *New Masses*, Communist journal of opinion, swelled the chorus of praise by calling the quarantine speech a major pronouncement, "a historic statement of the first rank . . . since we emerged as a major world power." The speech directed American foreign policy away from "isolation" toward "some form of collective security" and was in line with Secretary Stimson's doctrine "that this country would never recognize the territorial gains of an aggression." 37

Editors of opposition newspapers and weekly journals, especially those of Republican affiliations, in commenting on President Roosevelt's quarantine address, generally concurred with endorsers of the speech in respect of two matters: (i) the speech signified a repudiation of the policy of neutrality and non-entanglement which the President had long followed; and, (2) unless it was to be deemed a mere

36. *Ibid.*, October 18, 1937. Two years later, after Stalin made his pact with Hitler, in 1939, the Communist line became violent in its hostility to President Roosevelt's policy as "war-mongering" and "imperialist." After Hitler declared war on Russia in 1941, the Communist line was again "100 per cent" support for President Roosevelt and against Germany and her satellites in Europe. As Russia did not go to war with Japan until August, 1945, American Communists who took their cue from Moscow were circumspect about the American war in the Pacific which they had once decried, ferociously, as "imperialist" in spirit and purpose. To the old position on "imperialism" they returned, apparently without qualm, after the surrender of Japan in 1943.

37. October 19, 1937.

moral gesture, it called for positive action on internationalist principles. These contestants in the forum of public opinion differed, however, some more, some less, as to the willingness of the President to implement his words and as to the possibility or probability that, if duly implemented, the quarantine doctrine spelled peace or war for the United States.

Continuing in the vein of irony employed long ago by Charles A. Dana, but with no such devastating skill, the *New York Sun*, under the heading "So what, Mr. President?" inquired: "What does Mr. Roosevelt really intend to do about it?" After asserting that the President had showed a propensity for easy generalizations and reluctance to get down to details, the *Sun* accused him of criticizing certain countries in one breath and, in another, declaring that the United States was determined not to become entangled in another foreign war. At this point the author of the editorial said that the affair reminded him of the alarmed schoolmarm who shrieked commands of obedience to bad boys and at the same time vowed that she would never use the rod on them. "Surely," he continued, the President "does not suppose that the United States can impose its own standards of political morality on other nations by the simple process of slapping them rhetorically on the wrist." 38

About a week later the *Sun* seemed sure of one thing: the President's speech had knocked "the new neutrality" into a cocked hat as a guarantee of non-entanglement for the United States, and the country was "in a fair way to get into the Chinese imbroglio with both feet." Then it offered a lesson from history: Woodrow Wilson had been reelected in 1916 largely because he had kept us out of war and in April of the following year we were at war.³⁹ The next day, after the President's fireside chat, the *Sun* informed its readers that "in the world as it is, aggressive search for peace

38. October 6, 1937.

39. October 12, 1937.

40. October 13, 1937, p. 26.

The *New York Herald Tribune* in commenting on the Chicago speech took a stand similar to that of the *Sun*. It charged the President with resorting to rhetorical effusions and failing to calculate the probable consequences of any strong action designed to give effect to them.⁴¹ It also turned to the pages of history and recalled the outcome of President Wilson's war for democracy.

If [declared the *Herald Tribune*] the Germans have pointedly reminded President Roosevelt of the 'Wilson shipwreck,' he has only himself to thank. The Chicago speech could have been taken very nearly word for word from the impassioned oratory of twenty years ago which heralded the American intervention in the World War. . . .

So Mr. Wilson spoke and the consequence was the expenditure of about 125,000 lives and some \$25,000,000,000 "to make the world safe for democracy," with the results now visible in the contemporary world. So Mr. Roosevelt has spoken in turn. What the result will be no one can say; but it is evident that the Chicago speech, if it means anything (always a matter of some doubt with present-day Presidential utterances), means a reorientation of American policy upon Wilsonian lines and a rededication of American life and treasure to the difficult task of enforcing peace on earth.

The President, doubtless, did not intend it quite that way, for his words were guarded with a careful vagueness. But the reaction from Germany and Japan is enough to show how little even the most painstaking equivocation is likely to serve in practice. . . . The essence of Mr. Wilson's earlier policy was to strike a happy compromise between the two courses, encouraging peace on our own terms without accepting the pains and risk of war. The essence of Mr. Roosevelt's policy, as stated at Chicago, is apparently the same. "It is a matter of vital concern to the people of the United States that the sanctity of international treaties and the maintenance of international morality be restored." This, however, is to be achieved without fighting. To the defense of this "vital concern" we are to bring only moralistic exhortation in the

first instance, with, possibly, some kind of blockade or boycott should that fail. It is an easy, relatively painless and attractive prospect.

But before embarking upon it a second time ... it is worth thinking about what will happen in case both exhortation and boycott fail to conserve this “vital” interest. Could we then say that it was none of our affair and that the interest wasn’t really so “vital” after all?

Having incited the League powers to desperate adventure, could we wash our hands of the consequences when they threatened to be bloody? Hardly, and before cheering too loudly for the President’s sudden foreign diversion, it might be just as well to get it perfectly straight as to just what these “vital” interests are and just how vital they are in practice likely to prove.⁴²

As expected, the *Chicago Tribune* scored the quarantine speech. It charged the President with adopting the policy of Woodrow Wilson, which had brought the United States into war with Mexico and then into the first World War—“the policy which was overwhelmingly rejected by the American people after the war.” It contended that Japan would not be easily beaten to her knees, that the threat of a boycott would only inflame Japanese patriotism, and that if the boycott did not work the President would face the question: “What to do then?” It reminded him that President Wilson once found himself with no alternative but war and it asked: “Does not Mr. Roosevelt’s policy invite the coming of the day when he, too, may have no alternative but to resort to arms?”⁴³

Owing to the large Democratic vote in Boston, opinion in that city was important for any implementation of the quarantine speech. And the *Boston Herald*, on October 6, 1937, after referring to President Wilson’s experience, spoke in the

42. Editorial, October 7, 1937.

43. Quotations in the *New York Herald Tribune* and the *New York Times*, October 6, 1937.

manner of a warning: "But this time, Mr. President, Americans will not be stampeded into going 3,000 miles across the water to save them [the very foundations of civilization, referred to in the Chicago speech]. Crusade, if you must, but for the sake of several millions of American mothers confine your crusading to the continental limits of America."

The editors of the *New Republic*, then following the isolationist creed, dealt with the quarantine speech in terms of recent history and the long prospect ahead. They were of the opinion that the speech, if seriously intended, meant an abandonment of neutrality and the pursuit of a course that could only lead to the very world war which the President said he feared. Moral lectures to the aggressors, they claimed, would be ineffectual, and only an alliance of the peace-loving powers could defeat those aggressors "after a long and bloody war." 44

To Raymond Moley, former associate of President Roosevelt in politics and administration, the quarantine speech forecast "a new foreign policy for the United States." He declared that "there are abundant indications that the Chicago doctrine was fathered and partially formulated by William C. Bullitt, United States Ambassador to France," and that the new policy looked to "the sudden assumption of leadership in an effort to regenerate the world by enforced peace." Since much had been made by President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull of the moral obligations to uphold international law, Mr. Moley reminded them that there was one

44. October 20, 1937. In February, 1938, Bruce Bliven, editor of the *New Republic*, opposed the big navy bill then up in Congress on the recommendation of President Roosevelt. Mr. Bliven asserted that the real intention of the bill was not the defense of the United States but an excursion into world politics. Speaking of Walter Lippmann, Secretary Hull, and Admiral Leahy, Mr. Bliven accused them of misrepresenting the real purpose of the proposed naval measure: "I am not so rude as to think that these gentlemen really mean the nonsense they have told us. I believe they know very clearly what they are about, but refuse to make public either their intentions or the reasons behind their intentions." *Hearings before the Committee on Naval Affairs*, 75th Congress, 3d Session (February 9, 1938), pp. 210 ff. In other words, Mr. Bliven took the position that the sponsors of this bill were deliberately deceiving the public as to the real foreign policy they were pursuing and proposing.

law which they were also bound to uphold, namely, the Neutrality Act of 1937.⁴⁵

While the editor of the *American Mercury* thought that the quarantine performance at Chicago might be a kind of political trick, “extra-hazardous” in any case, he felt sure that it represented a clear reversal of American foreign policy. Referring to history, he remarked that President Roosevelt had been “decisively, almost ostentatiously, in favor of non intervention, keeping out of other people’s business, neutrality, abstention from war and all the rest of it,” but now at Chicago he had made “such a quick turn on his record that he left the toes of his shoes still pointing in the opposite direction.”⁴⁶

During the remainder of the year 1937, from October 5 to December 31, President Roosevelt made no public pronouncement and took no public action that indicated any change in the foreign policy he had expounded from February 2, 1932, to the day of the quarantine speech. Insofar as the outward signs of his thought and purposes were concerned, his foreign policy for the United States remained the same as it had been since 1932. And American citizens, friends as well as foes of his Administration, who expected him suddenly to apply the quarantine doctrine in practice, were disappointed in their anticipations. If, in fact, the Chicago address was intended to announce a new foreign policy, by the end of the year it seemed that the President had returned to his long proclaimed isolationist position.

On the occasion of sending Norman Davis to the Brussels conference of the signatories of the Nine-Power Treaty, called by the Belgian Government to consider the situation in China, President Roosevelt made a public announcement assuring the country that the United States

45. “Perspective,” *Newsweek*, October 15, 1937. Mr. Moley doubtless saw in the quarantine speech a definite relation to Mr. Roosevelt’s approval of the Stimson doctrine, which had alarmed him in January, 1933. Above, pp. 136 ff.

46. Editorial, December, 1937.

from commitments. In his statement, the President said: "Mr. Davis, of course, will enter the conference without any commitments on the part of this Government to other governments." 47 After the other Great Powers at Brussels, as well as the United States, declined to join in any form of concerted action against Japan and the conference adjourned, 48 the President accepted the failure without making any open protest in line with the quarantine doctrine.

President Roosevelt's message to the extraordinary session of Congress, November 15, 1937, was confined entirely to matters of domestic legislation. It contained no exposition of his foreign policy and no call for modifications in the Neutrality Act. 48

After Japanese airplanes had attacked the United States gunboat *Panay* on the Yangtze River, December 12, 1937, the President contented himself with demanding and receiving an apology from the Japanese Government and a check for the indemnity demanded. 50

In an exchange of telegrams on foreign policy between himself and Governor Alfred M. Landon, December 21, 1937, the President said that "throughout our long history we Americans have rejected every suggestion that ultimate security can be assured by closing our eyes to the fact that whether we like it or not we are a part of a large world of other nations and peoples." But he drew from this proposition no conclusion in harmony with the quarantine doctrine. He merely added, "As such we owe some measure of cooperation and even leadership in maintaining standards of conduct helpful to the ultimate goal of general peace." 51

As the year 1937 drew toward its close, advocates of collective action against designated aggressors seemed unable to discover any proof that President Roosevelt contemplated an effective application of his quarantine doctrine. In fact,

47. *Public Papers*, 1937 Vol., p. 463.

48. *American Year Book* (1937), p. 84.

49. *Public Papers*, 1937 Vol., pp. 490 ff.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 541 ff.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 549 ff.

they lamented the failure to implement the doctrine and laid most of the blame for this outcome on “isolationists,” “pacifists,” “blind peace groups,” and defenders of the Neutrality Act, critics of Great Britain, and “short-sighted people” who insisted that the purpose of the armed forces of the United States was to defend their own country.

For example, on November 30, 1937, the *New York Times* in an editorial deplored “America’s Aloofness.” It declared that “the United States has lost its leadership in world affairs,” and that dictators and treaty-breakers have become convinced that the country would initiate or join in an effective movement to uphold world peace “for no cause short of actual invasion.” For this outcome “the ‘isolationists’ and ‘pacifists’ in Congress and their vociferous supporters in the country are chiefly responsible.” The President, the editorial continued, had recently called for “quarantines” against governments guilty of butchery and aggression, but “pacifist and isolationist groups” had opposed positive action on that line and in so doing had given aid to such enemies of mankind.

Yet, the editors of the *Times* maintained, “our statesmen and leaders of public thought could aid peace mightily” if they would cast off their fear of “blind peace groups” and serve notice on foreign trouble-makers that the great democracies “will stand together” against the enemies of peace. Thus, the editors hoped, the ravishers of weak neighbors and enemies of democracy “will discover that the United States has not become so timorous and so stupid as to abandon its responsibility and imperil its greatness and its freedom.”

Professional advocates of peace shared the judgment of the *New York Times*. For instance, the *Chronicle of World Affairs* for December, 1937, published by the League of Nations Association under the editorship of Clark Eichelberger, took the Roosevelt Administration to task for refusing to urge strong measures against Japan at the Brussels conference. The *Chronicle* laid the principal blame for this break down to “British moribundity” in the

action and to the complete lack of any American plan of action beyond moral persuasion. If the United States had taken a firm stand for strong action against Japan, the author of the editorial insisted, "the British bluff" would have been called, and "the United States would have lost nothing." Why had the United States defaulted in its duty? "The trouble seems to be that no plans, practical or otherwise, have been formulated for such efforts. It may be an injustice to say so, but there is every appearance of those at Washington 'sitting around and waiting for something to turn up.'"

If, as the *Chronicle* suggested, the United States had stood squarely for collective action on quarantine principles at the Brussels conference, the British might have had their "bluff called." Judging by comments of the British press on the quarantine speech, however, the British doubted whether the President would in fact venture to act upon it, if he really wished to do so, and were convinced that the American people would not follow him into the League of Nations or any collective agreement to designate aggressors and apply armed force to them in case they refused to yield to threats. The views of the *London Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Daily Express* on the quarantine speech were fairly well summed up by the *Fortnightly* of December, 1937, in an effort at metaphorical humor. "The American people," said the *Fortnightly* in discussing President Roosevelt's alleged reversal of policy, "haven't got any further than consenting to let their darling daughter swim in the good old way; but she must not go near the water, indeed, she must not even hang her clothes on a hickory limb. For the moment, a sort of diplomatic strip-tease act is all that will be allowed. American active intervention, like the art of Miss Lee, must wait for happier days." In some respects this prophecy was correct: active intervention did have to wait, but whether the days were "happier" must be submitted to the judgment of history to come.

Associates of the Geneva Research Center, always on the alert for the slightest deviation in American foreign policy, felt compelled to report that the Government of the United States had not, during the year, departed from the doctrine of isolationism. They noted that "the United States gave in creasingly serious attention to world affairs," and that the American ideal of respect for treaties and international law coincided with that of the League of Nations. They greeted with pleasure the President's quarantine speech and spoke gratefully of the cordial cooperation between Washington and Geneva as revealing an "affinity of purpose."

But having made as much as they could of the record, the Associates confessed that no real change had taken place in the relations of the United States to political activities of the League. They wrote that the "affinity of purpose" between the two institutions "did not take concrete form . . . nor imply any change in the different methods followed. The League remained an organization for consultation, negotiation, evaluation, and even enforcement; the United States continued uncommitted except for the uncertain obligations of the Pact of Paris and the Neutrality Act." 52 Contact between the two "tended to become firmer," and yet "no change of principles or obligation took place." There had been cordial cooperation, but "Serious gaps existed in this cooperation . . . due to America's non-membership in the League. Most important was her absence from the two central agencies, Assembly and Council, which both initiate and approve the League's many activities. American participation was not, therefore, fully effective, either as regards initiative or control. The result was disadvantageous both to the United States and the League. . . . America's most striking single absence still remained its non-adhesion to the World Court." 53

52. There could be no uncertainty as to the fact that the United States assumed no obligations to the League of Nations or to internationalism in the Pact or the Act.

53. *American Year Book* (1937), pp. 92 ff.

At the opening of the new year, 1938, the debate over the quarantine speech seemed to have died away. As the days passed the silence of the White House remained unbroken. Both internationalists and isolationists appeared to regard the issue raised by the President at Chicago on October 5, 1937, as closed: he intended to do nothing in the way of putting it into effect. In his annual message to Congress, January 3, 1938, he referred to America's love of peace, said nothing about his new foreign policy, if he had one, but drew attention to the growing conflicts and disorders abroad as matters of concern to the United States.

Later in the month, January 28, 1938, President Roosevelt sent a special message to Congress calling for increases in naval armaments and for legislation aimed at "the prevention of profiteering in time of war and the equalization of the burdens of possible war." On its face, this message seemed to have no particular significance. The proposed increase of naval expenditures was not so large as to be sensationally out of line with other increases in naval appropriations from time to time since 1933. Schemes for "taking the profits out of war" had been up in Congress frequently since the discovery of the enormous profiteering that had accompanied the first World War; and the "equalization of burdens in war time" had likewise been long discussed by the American Legion and Members of Congress, in connection with conscription or universal service, as "a measure of democratic justice and equality." Now, on January 28, President Roosevelt merely said that he believed the time had come to legislate against war profiteering and in favor of equality in war burdens.

But owing to the fact that the echoes of the quarantine speech were still ringing in the national capital and to certain actions recommended and certain phrases used by the President, his appeal to Congress was taken by watchful critics to be an indication of a purpose to underwrite or implement the quarantine principle, by augmenting the navy and making provisions for an immense army. At all events immediately after the message was made public, a determined op-

position began to describe and condemn his proposals as some kind of “search for peace” that connoted intervention in the power politics of Europe and Asia.

This is no place to give a record of all the circumstances which surrounded President Roosevelt’s call for the new legislation and the conflict over it in Congress and outside. To do that would be to write a fuller history of those times. But on one point great emphasis was laid by the opposition: Why has the President demanded these new armament measures at this particular moment? The armament program for the coming year had long been under consideration in Congress; and one week before the message of January 28, making new demands, the House of Representatives had passed the largest appropriation bill for the navy ever adopted in the history of peace times—a bill granting substantially every request made by the Navy Department. Why the additional demands? Why had they been postponed and then suddenly advanced? What had happened since the close of 1937 to warrant this precipitate action? Such were the questions asked immediately after the message was sent to Congress and during the months of hearings and debates on the bills, naval and military, projected in implementing the message.

A full exposition of the political implications involved in the President’s recommendations would require a review of hundreds of pages of congressional hearings and debates bearing on them. But, to speak with utmost brevity, the demand for more battleships was interpreted to be a call for instruments of action in distant waters rather than for instruments of defense in the American sphere; and the “equalization of burdens” was taken to mean the establishment of a huge army by universal conscription—an action widely deemed unnecessary for defense and as designed for expeditionary operations in a foreign war, as in 1917 and 1918.

The phrases in the President’s message which awakened distrust among opponents of intervention in foreign quarrels appeared in the passages justifying his call for increased armaments. He declared that he made his recommendations

cifically and solely because of the piling up of additional land and sea armaments in other countries, in such manner as to involve a threat to world peace and security, . . . It is our clear duty to further every effort toward peace but at the same time to protect our Nation. That is the purpose of these recommendations. Such protection is and will be based not on aggression but on defense.”

Taken in connection with the President’s declaration at Chicago that the United States could not hope to escape the horrors of the coming war and that peace must be sought through a quarantine, or collective action, against aggressors, these lines of the message were regarded as evidence that he had the idea of quarantine in mind when he wrote them. With insistent reiteration, his critics pointed out that he had made these recommendations *solely* and *specifically* on account of a threat to *world peace and security*, rather than on account of a threat to the peace and security of the United States; and with equal pertinacity they cried out that he had laid it down as our clear duty *to further every effort toward peace*, adding secondarily, at the same time to protect our Nation.

In expounding and defending the proposed program before the House Committee on Naval Affairs, Admiral William D. Leahy, chosen by the President as his spokesman, said early in the proceedings: “The political conditions in the world at this moment, both in Europe and in the Far East, are far more threatening than at any time since 1918, and no improvement is in sight. The major conflict in China has resulted in many grave incidents involving the sovereign rights and interests of the United States and other third powers. The civil war in Spain continues unabated and the threat of a general European conflict is ever present.” Only at the end of this recital did the Admiral speak of a possible seizure of the republics of Central and South America by foreign powers as suggesting the need for increased armaments to be used in American waters. Later in the hearing he

discussed at some length the operations of Germany, Italy, and Japan as affording justification for greater naval construction by the United States.

Admiral Leahy had not gone very far in his exposition of the political argument for large armaments, when a Republican member of the Naval Affairs Committee raised the issue of foreign policy by asking the Admiral to go into the matter of the relation between the "quarantine" doctrine and "the President's message that led to this bill." The Admiral by-passed the question by saying that the Navy Department had nothing to do with policy and that he had "no idea what the future policy may be."

Subsequently, in the hearings, the issue of the relation between the quarantine doctrine and the battleships was raised again and again by members of the House Committee and by witnesses who appeared before it. Moreover, the whole question of implementing American power politics in the Far East was brought up in connection with battleships designed for operations in distant waters, extending the range of the discussion. Indeed the fate of the bill was put into such jeopardy by protests against its alleged quarantine and imperialist implications that the chairman of the committee, Carl Vinson, went to the White House and reviewed with President Roosevelt the matter of his foreign policy in relation to the measure. Did the President regard the new naval bill as representing a reversal of the non-entanglement and non-intervention policy which he had repeatedly endorsed between February 2, 1932 and "quarantine" day, October 5, 1937?

After the chairman's conference with President Roosevelt, the majority members of the Naval Affairs Committee amended the text of the new naval bill by inserting a long declaration of policy: "It is declared to be the fundamental naval policy of the United States to maintain a Navy in sufficient strength to guarantee our national security, not for

affording naval protection to the coast line, in both oceans at one and the same time; to protect the Panama Canal, Alaska, Hawaii, and our Insular possessions; to protect our commerce and citizens abroad; to insure our national integrity; and to support our national policies.” To this declaration other lines were added, including a provision referring to the possibility of further naval limitations by international agreement.⁵⁴ Although these amendments were by no means satisfactory to the opposition, they at least confined American naval policy to the protection and promotion of “national interests” instead of the maintenance and promotion of “world peace and security,” as indicated in President Roosevelt’s naval message.

At the end of the hearings on the naval bill, a minority of the Naval Affairs Committee, three Republicans and one Democrat, dissented from the report of the majority favoring the President’s program.⁵⁵ In their own dissenting report the three Republicans maintained that the navy bill was not a defense bill, that its purpose was to implement the President’s quarantine policy, that the public had rejected this policy, and that Great Britain had also refused to cooperate with him in giving effect to it. Turning to the Far East in particular, the minority of three maintained that the President’s purpose was “to pursue ‘power politics’ in Asia” and that the amendment attached to the bill “reveals the designs of the universal quarantine policy and the interventionist policy in Asia and upholds the obsolete British-Mahan sea-power doctrine.” In a summation under the head, “This Bill Is a Blank Check,” the minority asserted tersely: “If this bill is passed the President will have a blanket authorization, after Congress ad

54. *Report of the Committee on Naval Affairs*, No. 1899, H. R., 75th Congress, 3d Session (1938), p. 2.

55. *Minority Views*, No. 1899, Pt-2 H. R., 75th Congress, 3d Session (1938). In this dissent the three Republican members in effect took the line of the old Republicans who had opposed imperialism in the early part of the century even though they would not support William Jennings Bryan and “free silver.” As to imperialism itself they were following the Democratic line of

journals, to apply the universal-quarantine policy and Asiatic interventionist policy.”

During the extended debates on the naval bill in the House of Representatives and the Senate, the relations between armament measures and foreign policy were subjected to a scrutiny unusual in the history of naval bills. Supporters of the Administration stuck close to the argument that the naval bill was designed for defense, not aggression, and that it was not intended to implement the quarantine doctrine or any other project for intervention in foreign wars, as the minority maintained. On the other side, advantage was taken of the opportunity to dissect and criticize President Roosevelt’s quarantine and interventionist policies and argue that war perils were inherent in the pursuit of such policies.

After prolonged discussion in Congress, the naval authorization bill was passed; but the actions of the President, the Congress, and the Navy Department after the enactment of the law convinced opponents of the measure that they had been correct in their contention that, in spite of disclaimers, the Act was designed to underwrite quarantine, interventionist, and imperialist policies—in other words, to give the President an instrument to use in foreign conflicts. All along the minority insisted that the technical features of the bill supported their case. In the House Minority Report, the opposition pointed out that under the Vinson-Trammell Act of 1934 Congress had authorized a \$4,000,000,000 program of naval building, and that there was already in the statutes authorization to build nine new battleships in the next five years (to 1943)—“nine battleships as large and powerful as the naval experts deem necessary to defend America—besides the two now building.” In these circumstances, the opposition asked: “Why should Congress authorize three more \$75,000,000 battleships when the Navy is not ready to build three battleships that are already authorized?”

In countering this argument, made while the new naval bill was still pending in 1938, sponsors of the bill declared

that the battleships contemplated by the measure would be started promptly after the authorization was adopted by Congress. Yet after the naval bill demanded by the President had been carried, Congress did not at once appropriate the money for the ships authorized under the Act.

On the contrary, the Deficiency Act, approved June 25, 1938 (52 Stat. L. 1094) for the fiscal years ending June 30, 1938, and June 30, 1939, simply provided money for commencing two battleships already authorized by the Act approved March 27, 1934. The money so appropriated was to cover the cost of two new ships in addition to the two for which appropriations had been made in 1937 and two more for which appropriations had been made early in the year 1938. This failure to act immediately under the new naval law demanded and secured by President Roosevelt served further to convince opponents of the proposal that it was "a foreign policy" measure, not, as alleged, "a defense measure"; that it was a diplomatic "bluffing" bill and was fraught with perils of war.

Although President Roosevelt was successful in obtaining the enactment of the naval bill called for by his message of January 28, 1938, Congress refused to comply with his request for an "equalization" law or, as he characterized it at a press conference, a "mobilization" measure. Congress was unwilling to pass a thorough-going bill for taking the profits out of war and for establishing universal military service. A serious, if passionate, discussion of the subject took place at committee hearings, in Congress, and in the press. Charges and countercharges were made.⁵⁶ It was alleged by opponents that there was only one design behind a universal service measure: namely, preparation of an expeditionary army for a foreign war; that no gigantic army was then needed for purposes purely defensive. On the other side the existence

56. For example, see *Preventing Profiteering in Time of War and to Equalize the Burdens of War and Thus Provide for the National Defense, and Promote Peace*, No. 1870, H. R., 75th Congress, 3d Session.

any such purpose, in connection with the equalization or mobilization project, was vigorously denied. Whatever the meaning or merits of the proposal, Congress adjourned without enacting a bill for giving effect to it.

In upshot, the "big navy" bill had been passed by Congress; the war mobilization project had died in committee; supporters of the Administration program had doubly assured the country that in adopting the recommendations for increases in naval construction they had in mind only defense, not collective security, quarantine, or intervention in foreign political controversies; and President Roosevelt had issued in connection with the dispute no pronouncements out of accord with the asseverations of his supporters. As a net result, many Americans, if disturbed by the turmoil of the season, were left with the definite impression that the President still stood for defense, security, neutrality, and peace for the United States. If there had been any turn in foreign policy on his part when he wrote his naval message of January 28, 1938, there had been a return at the end of the great national debate.

During the remainder of the year 1938 President Roosevelt certainly made no other public pronouncements that could be construed as departing from the doctrine of no political entanglements and no political intervention abroad which he had set forth on February 2, 1932, and had so frequently reiterated. He did from time to time call the attention of the country to growing war perils in Europe and Asia, and let it be known that he was still seeking peace. He ■■■■cut a message to Czechoslovakia, Germany, Great Britain, and France on September 27, 1938, in behalf of efforts to find a "peaceful solution of the threat of war," and on the ■■■■ime day he directed a message to Chancellor Hitler in a similar vein.⁵⁷

But in these communications he declared that "the United States has no political entanglements," and that its traditional

J7. *Public Papers*, 1938 Vol., pp. 531 ff., 535 ff.

policy has been "the furtherance of the settlement of international disputes by pacific means." Both were in the nature of moral appeals, not threats. The reference to the settlement of disputes by pacific means merely re-echoed sentiments that had often been expressed by Republicans and Democrats for many decades. It was far removed from any advocacy of collective security, sanctions, or coercion. Nor did the President in addresses made with reference to the congressional campaign, then in progress, say anything that might precipitate another storm, such as his quarantine speech of October 5, 1937, or his naval message of January 28, 1938, had brought down upon his head.

From the point of view of internationalists, the pronouncements and actions of the Roosevelt Administration in respect of American foreign policy during the year 1938 were for practical purposes a total loss. In their appraisal for the year the Associates of the Geneva Center could enter on the credit side of the year's ledger nothing in the nature of even a gesture at Washington in the direction of the internationalism which they championed. They wrote pleasantly of the message transmitted "through the American legation at Berne," inviting the League of Nations to organize an exhibit at the New York World's Fair, and of the steps taken to prepare the exhibit. They set down with satisfaction the item that there had been sympathetic cooperation between the United States and the League in technical, labor, and humanitarian affairs and the additional item that the pacific ideals of the United States were akin to those of the League. Efforts to discover in the public statements and actions of the Roosevelt Administration for the year some real grist for the mill of internationalism taxed the ingenuity of the Geneva Associates to the limit. At the outset, they framed an excuse for the failure of the Administration to move in then direction: "During the critical year of 1938, the opportunity did not offer for the United States to take as large a part in the League's general work as previously." But their part explanation of this mishap was a notation that European

powers, in regard to some highly important matters, were also operating outside the League. In other words, the associates attributed the Administration's lack of opportunity for participation in "the League's general work," in some measure, to the fact that "there developed more and more a tendency to handle such affairs outside the League: Spain, for instance, in part, and Czechoslovakia entirely."

Having proffered this excuse for American neglect of the League, the Geneva Associates were encouraged by what they regarded as evidences that the United States was in "complete accord with the League's underlying philosophy." but they could not report that this "complete accord" had resulted in any political approach to the League which went beyond the genuflections of previous years.

Indeed, they seemed astonished by this contradiction between "complete accord" and actual practice, for they exclaimed: "What was surprising, however, was that, with this complete sympathy of viewpoint and a very considerable degree of actual cooperation, there was only the most cautious suggestion of even a limited reconsideration of a better relationship between the two. . . . Considerable groups within the United States were beginning to feel that the country had become an uncomfortable part of the world scene, insecure, if not positively endangered by outside events. . . . None of this, however, found strong reflection in the Government's attitude toward the League of Nations, nor in any proposal of a freer and more effective method of cooperation with an international agency, however imperfect, dedicated to the advancement of international peace and cooperation." 58

In sum, what the Geneva Associates ventured to report as possible changes in United States foreign policy during the year 1938 was exceedingly tenuous: "there was only the most cautious suggestion of even a limited reconsideration of a better relationship" between the United States and the

58. "The United States and World Organization during 1938," *International Conciliation*. September. 1939 (Carnegie Endowment). pp. 375 ff.

League; “considerable groups in the United States” were beginning to feel uncomfortable about the business; but neither this discomfort nor anything else had “found strong reflection in the Government’s attitude toward the League of Nations”; nor had there been, on the part of the United States “any proposal of a freer and more effective method of cooperation” with the League. Thus, as far as the Geneva Associates could actually find out, President Roosevelt was standing at the end of 1938 where he had stood on foreign policy in his Grange speech of February 2, 1932.

CHAPTER IX

'Neutrality, Peace, and Non-intervention Reaffirmed in 1939

With the intensity that characterized his quarantine speech of October 5, 1937, President Roosevelt, on January 4, 1939, spoke to Congress of undeclared wars raging "all about us" and of threats of new aggression "all about us." On this occasion and at great length, he admonished Congress that war perils were mounting higher and higher. "Storms from abroad," he said, "directly challenge three institutions indispensable to Americans, now as always. The first is religion. It is the source of the other two—democracy and international good faith. . . . Godfearing democracies of the world . . . cannot forever let pass, without effective protest, acts of aggression against sister nations—acts which automatically undermine all of us." For the moment it looked as if he would take the next step: again summon the democracies to join in applying an effective quarantine to aggressors as enemies of mankind and make an appeal for a new foreign policy.

But the President paused on the brink of such a momentous resolution, if he had the possibility in mind, and made no break with the foreign policy of abstention from interference with arms in the conflicts of Europe and Asia. "Obviously," he continued, the Godfearing democracies "must proceed along practical, peaceful lines. But the mere fact that we rightly decline to intervene with arms to prevent acts of aggression does not mean that we must act as if there were no aggression at all. . . . There are many methods short of war, but stronger and more effective than mere words, of bringing home to aggressor governments the aggregate sentiments of our own people. At the very least, we can and should avoid any action, or any lack of action, which will encourage, assist or build up an aggressor."

And what practical action did President Roosevelt recommend to Congress? He intimated that the neutrality legislation might well be changed, for he declared we have learned that our neutrality laws “may operate unevenly and unfairly—may actually give aid to an aggressor and deny it to the victim.” He also emphasized the need of greater preparedness for defense. Yet he did not urge a repeal of the neutrality legislation or any other measure pointed in the direction of action on the part of the United States against aggressors.¹

If anyone interpreted his message of January 4 to imply that he had modified his conception of the proper foreign policy for the United States, the interpretation was soon disavowed: at a press conference on February 3, 1939, the President said that his foreign policy had not changed and he restated it. A journalist present remarked that “some people seem to have some difficulty understanding foreign policy,” and asked the President whether he had “any intention of getting down to the elementary A, B and C’s in a statement, or speech, or fireside talk in the near future.” The President replied that the foreign policy of the United States had been “thoroughly” covered in his message to Congress, “completely and adequately covered in every way,” that there was nothing new about it, and that a great many people, including Senators, Representatives, and newspaper owners were “deliberately” misrepresenting the facts. He then referred to eight or ten newspapers on the desk before him as giving, “to put it politely,” an erroneous impression.

Thereupon the President recited the following formulas to the journalists assembled in his conference room:

The foreign policy has not changed and it is not going to change. If you want a comparatively simple statement of the policy, I will give it to you . . .

Number 1: We are against any entangling alliances, obviously.

Number 2: We are in favor of the maintenance of world trade for everybody—all nations—including ourselves.

Number 3: We are in complete sympathy with any and every effort made to reduce or limit armaments.

Number 4: As a Nation—as American people—we are sympathetic with the peaceful maintenance of political, economic and social independence of all nations in the world.

Now, that is very, very simple. There is absolutely nothing new in it. The American people are beginning to realize that the things they have read and heard, both from agitators of the legislative variety and the agitators of the newspaper owner variety, have been pure bunk—b-u-n-k, bunk; that these agitators are appealing to the ignorance, the prejudice, and the fears of Americans and are acting in an un-American way.

Now, on the question of secrecy, that also is 100 per cent

If the President's reply to questioners at his press conference on February 3, 1939, lacked anything in precision with reference to peace, neutrality, and non-intervention, this deficiency was more than made good later in the course of the year. During the spring and summer, while European powers were engaged in the feverish negotiations which threatened to eventuate in a general war, the whole subject of American neutrality and non-intervention became the storm center of a nation-wide controversy. Nominally, this controversy turned on proposals to revise the Neutrality Act, particularly to eliminate the provisions that placed an embargo on the sale of arms, munitions, and implements of war to all foreign belligerents when the President should "find" a state of war existing abroad. Actually the old issue of non-intervention in foreign conflicts as against collective security was the heart of the dispute.

Now confident that no advance toward their goal could be made under the head of "quarantine," many internationalists, with aid from other quarters, concentrated on a repeal of

the munitions embargo. In support of their project they contended that, if the President had a free hand in controlling

and other democracies could be exempted from embargo, the Axis powers would or might be diverted from their aggressive plans or at least be put at a disadvantage in case war came anyway. On the other side, isolationists felt certain that Executive manipulation of foreign relations, coupled with the munitions traffic, was mainly responsible for getting the United States into the World War in 1917, and that a repeal of the munitions embargo in 1939 was simply another device for involving this country in another world war, already in prospect.

The controversy over neutrality legislation was brought to a head and pointed up by direct action on the part of the Roosevelt Administration. In May, 1939, Sol Bloom, acting chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, at the instigation of Secretary Hull, introduced in the House of Representatives a "neutrality resolution" providing for revisions of the Neutrality Act and eliminating the embargo on the sale of arms, munitions, and implements of war to foreign belligerents to be applied in time of war. The Bloom resolution was referred to the Foreign Affairs Committee, hearings were held, and in due course the bill was reported to the House for debate and action. But the House, before passing the bill, insisted that an arms embargo provision be inserted in the measure, thus defeating Secretary Hull's plans. In this dilemma, baffled in the House, Secretary Hull turned to the Senate, and in vain; for the Senate committee in charge of neutrality measures by a close vote deferred action on modifications of the Neutrality Act.³

On behalf of the Administration's proposal, sponsored by Representative Bloom, it was argued that the embargo provisions of the Neutrality Act tied the hands of the President in conducting foreign affairs and hampered him in his efforts to prevent a general war abroad and if it came to keep the United States out of such a war. Indeed a composite summary of the principal arguments advanced in the House of Repre

3. *Peace and War, 1931-1941* (Department of State, January, 1943, text), p. 64.

sentatives in support of a repeal of the embargo on the sale of munitions to belligerents could be correctly entitled "pleas for promoting the neutrality and peace of the United States by means of modifications in the Neutrality Act." A few citations from the debate of the House of Representatives in June, 1939, illustrate the nature of the pleas.⁴

Representative W. O. Burgin, Democrat, of North Carolina:

The United States wants peace. There can be no doubt about that. I believe that feeling exists in the heart of all of our people, regardless of party, race, or creed. We want to keep war out of the United States, and we want war kept out of the world. I believe this will or desire for peace permeates the thinking of every man in public life, from President Roosevelt down to the least and last man. No one, I think, in this House will vote for any legislation except with this in mind. I believe the President's action in the past trying times has been a potent factor in discouraging the spread of the war spirit in other parts of the world. . . .

I realize, as Secretary Hull did, that no law which we can write can be guaranteed to keep us out of war. All we can do is to see to it that our legislation, first, minimizes the chance that war will break out at all—the only really safe way of keeping out of war; and second, if it does break out, that it will not involve us (p. 8178).

Representative Luther A. Johnson, Democrat, of Texas:

...I am for the repeal of the embargo because I believe it will help to prevent war. . . . When we passed the neutrality law I said that the arms embargo would not prevent war, but would serve to encourage other nations. I hoped other nations would follow our example and pass similar laws, but they did not do so.

I say to this House that in view of the conditions as they now exist, to leave this law on the statute books is not to discourage war but to encourage war by causing war to break out . . . (p.8324).

4. These extracts are from the *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 84, Pt. 8 (June, 1939). The number at the end of each extract

Representative E. V. Izac, Democrat, of California:

I want the Members to bear in mind as I go along with my remarks the fact that the American people are demanding some kind of neutrality legislation for the express purpose of keeping us out of war. I am convinced the only reason that the Committee on Foreign Affairs held hearings as early as 1935 and passed a neutrality bill was because of the demand of the American public that we have something more than international law on which to rely in case the world again catches fire as it did in 1914. The present act is an evolution of the act of 1935. We have placed in the act something which I opposed, and which I will always oppose, a partial embargo. Whenever you have a partial embargo it is bound to be unneutral because no two nations are situated alike. . . .

The present act does not mean we are neutral. It does not keep the nations of the world at peace, and therefore we are remiss in our duty to the American people in that we are deluding them that by having this feature in the act we are keeping the peace and keeping this Nation, incidentally, out of war. True, we have kept out of the war, but it was as a result of the action of our President, in my opinion, who had all the opportunity in the world, if he wanted it, to get into a war, but he has not wanted to do so, and I bring that to your attention. He has not wanted to, much as you hear about our President leading us into a war. He has been in power here for six or seven years and during all of that time nations were at war or were at each others' throats, both in the Orient and over across in Europe, and he never resorted to the slightest pretense of going into war. He tried to maintain the dignity of the American Republic in the eyes of the world, and I think he has done so, but here you are tying his hands in not giving to some of the smaller nations the right to defend themselves (pp. 8234-8235).

Representative L. E. Geyer, Democrat, of California:

... in my opinion the passage of this bill will serve the interests of peace everywhere, by to some extent lessening the danger of war in Europe. To my mind the best proof that the Bloom bill will have this effect is to be found in the press of those nations

which are today mobilizing and preparing for war. The American people and the devotees of peace in every land, will welcome the passage of this bill as a step toward peace. But Rome and Berlin are shrieking that it is a form of "war-mongering," and Hitler and Mussolini, through their controlled press, tell us to vote down the Bloom bill. With whom are you going to vote? With the American people; or with the war lords of fascism?

The Bloom bill is a step toward peace. But in my opinion it is a hesitant step. I would prefer to see this country step out more firmly, more boldly, in the direction of blocking the way of those

Representative Pete Jarman, Democrat, of Alabama:

... the Committee on Foreign Affairs of both the Houses ... did hold very extended hearings—open hearings—to which all concerned were invited. ... After these hearings a bill was dropped in the hopper by the acting chairman of our committee. ... I have not asked Chairman Bloom who wrote that bill. It bears his name. But I do say this: ... It is natural to look to the Secretary of State ... I am perfectly willing to follow the suggestions of Secretary of State Cordell Hull in such matters, particularly at a time so serious as we fear this to be. ... I do not believe we have ever had a Secretary of State or a President of the United States who would deliberately lead us down the road to war for an ulterior purpose. ... At any rate, this bill, no matter who authorized it, we think in the Committee is a good bill, which will contribute toward the peace of America (pp. 8148- 8149).

Representative J. W. Wadsworth, Republican, of New York:

I believe the existence of that embargo against the exportation of munitions in the permanent law is a source of danger. With all my heart I hope it will be eliminated.

Many people are of the belief, and I honor their beliefs, that in neutrality laws lies safety. I disagree. I think the safety and the peace of the people of the United States lie in their retention of the right to do what is best for America when the time comes.

My plea is for freedom of action, and that is all. Freedom to do what is best for us, no binding rules, no inflexible regulations, maintain our self-respect, work our best for peace, but be for ever free.

I feel that way about these neutrality acts, just as I did about the Covenant of the League of Nations . . . (pp. 8158-8159).

In opposition to any weakening of the Neutrality Act, especially the repeal of the embargo on the sale of munitions to belligerents, a major proposition was asserted and reasserted during the debate in the House of Representatives over the Bloom bill: It was by the sale of munitions and extension of credits to the Entente Allies that the United States became involved in the first World War, step by step; if the embargo on munitions is repealed and the selling of munitions and the extension of credits are started again, the United States will repeat the old story and get into the next general war, step by step; and the best way to keep the United States out of all foreign wars is to maintain the Neutrality Act in full force, strengthen it if need be, and adhere to neutrality as proclaimed under it when and if a general war breaks out in Europe.

Illustrations of this line of argument follow:

Representative Martin J. Kennedy, Democrat, of New York:

At this time I want to make it clear that my decision to oppose this resolution has been reached after careful study and consideration. Deep down in my heart I believe it would be a serious mistake to adopt the present resolution, but if we must have a change I believe it would be far better to repeal the entire law. The people of my district are scared to death that this resolution will lead to war. God knows they have enough to worry about without this problem. For all of these reasons, I hope the resolution will not be adopted (p. 8173).

Representative G. H. Tinkham, Republican, of Massachusetts:

I was educated to be a professor and writer of history. I am thoroughly convinced, with my 50 years' experience in Europe and my reading of history, that if this bill is approved by this House and finally becomes law it means war for the United States. . . .

I say to this House that the issue of war is now before us and that we should not allow ourselves to be deluded by fallacious arguments into taking absolutely wrong positions as we did 20 years ago (pp. 8160-8161).

Representative P. W. Shafer, Republican, of Michigan:

Mr. Chairman, the American people do not want to be dragged into another European war which is now in the making. This Bloom bill . . . is a war-promotion bill clothed in the robes of neutrality. This bill is just what the international bankers, international war-mongers, and war profiteers desire.

The present Democratic administration is in control of the same international forces which plunged America into the World War in the name of "Making the world safe for democracy," and "A war to end all wars." The fathers and mothers of America do not want their sons slaughtered or maimed on foreign battlefields in order to pull foreign nations' chestnuts out of the fire and make blood money for international bankers, munitions makers, and war profiteers (p. 8318).

Representative J. M. Vorys, Republican, of Ohio:

The real issue in this bill arises from a fundamental difference as to the way to peace. The President's policy is to use the threat of our power to preserve a balance of power in Europe. Opposed to this is the traditional American belief that the way to peace is for us to be neutral, not biased; friendly, and not threatening. The President's theory is that if we stop war from starting we will not get into war. If we make a strong enough bluff we can prevent war from starting. The President has no more intention of luring us into war than he had six years ago of taking us into debt; but we have learned that despite good intentions, if you depend enough you get into debt, and if you threaten enough you let into war. The road to war is paved with threats.

I have two criticisms to make of this policy. First we have no assurance that the threat of our force will be sufficient to stop war in Europe. No one can give us that assurance.

Second, if the bluff does not work, we will inevitably go into war. When any international incident takes place on the faith of our promise to one side or threat to the other, the pressure to make good our bluff, to back up our commitment will be irresistible. If you think that our eventual entry into the next war is inevitable, then vote for the Bloom bill as is. . . .

America has come to believe that the sale of arms to belligerents is immoral, un-Christian and leads to war. Most experts on international law favor retention of the arms embargo. . . . Mr. Hull says that he can see no difference between the selling of arms to belligerents and the selling of anything else they may need. That is because he thinks of neutrality in terms of helping or hindering some other nation and not in terms of helping ourselves. I emphasize this particularly: There is no principle of international law that requires us to sell arms to anybody (p. 8151).

Representative J. M. Robsion, Republican, of Kentucky:

I am against this Bloom so-called neutrality bill. Its major purpose is to repeal the present law that contains an embargo against the shipment of arms, ammunitions, and munitions of war to nations engaged in war. This Bloom bill will permit the shipment of these arms, ammunitions, and war materials from this country to warring nations. This action will involve us in another World War just as it did in 1917. This bill is unneutral and President Roosevelt who is charged with the carrying out of this law is not neutral. It, therefore, is not a neutrality bill to promote peace but it is rather a bill to promote another World War and involve us in that war (p. 8486).

Unable to secure from Congress the modification of the Neutrality Act which had been sought through the mediation of Secretary Hull, President Roosevelt, in a special message to that body on July 14, 1939, made a personal appeal for action in favor of the Administration's program. The main part of his message consisted of a long statement on the

subject by the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, which, the President said, "has my full approval." On his own part, he assured Congress that he asked for the modification of the law in the interest of peace, security, and neutrality; "It has been abundantly clear to me for some time that *for the cause of -peace and in the interest of American neutrality and security*, it is highly advisable that the Congress at this session should take certain much needed action." 5

Secretary Hull's statement coincided with the opinion thus briefly set forth by President Roosevelt in the introductory part of his message. "In substance and in principle," Mr. Hull declared clearly and emphatically, "*both sides of the discussion agree on the following points*:"

1. Both sides agree that *the first concern of the United States must be its own peace and security*.
2. Both sides agree that it should be the policy of this Govern
ment *to avoid being drawn into wars between other nations*.
3. Both sides agree that this nation should at all times *avoid entangling alliances or involvements with other nations*.
4. Both sides agree that *in the event of foreign wars this nation should maintain a status of strict neutrality*, and that *around the structure of neutrality we should so shape our*

Here, in a few plain and unmistakable words, Secretary Hull, with the unequivocal endorsement of President Roosevelt, expounded to Congress and the country the doctrine of Non-entanglement, non-involvement, neutrality, and peace for the United States, which had been so often proclaimed by the President himself since February 2, 1932. This was the very position which nationalists and even the most intransigent isolationists had been taking all along and were taking at the very moment when Secretary Hull squarely committed the Administration to it again.

On principle, therefore, the contending parties agreed. The

5. *Public Papers*, 1939 Vol., pp. 381 ff. (Italics supplied.)

6. *Ibid.* (Italics supplied.)

only difference between them, Secretary Hull explained, was over the method of achieving this supreme end for the United States. On his part, Secretary Hull argued at great length for modifications of the Neutrality Act and for entrusting more power to the President and the Secretary of State in conducting foreign affairs in the interest of the United States. This, he pleaded, is the best way to attain the objective claimed by both contestants in the debate; that is, to keep the country out of war.

But the Senate was obdurate. The votes necessary to pass the President's proposal could not be marshaled, despite the large Democratic majority in the chamber. Not even at a White House conference between President Roosevelt and leaders of both parties in the Senate could the deadlock be broken. And Congress adjourned in August, leaving the munitions embargo on the statute books.⁷

On September 1, 1939, the German dictator, Adolf Hitler, then in league with the Russian dictator, Josef Stalin, ordered his battalions of death forward into war against Poland, and Great Britain and France responded by declaring war on Germany. On September 3 President Roosevelt spoke to the nation over the radio, and, besides warning the people of grave difficulties at hand, informed them of the policies he planned to pursue:

Let no man or woman thoughtlessly or falsely talk of America sending its armies to European fields. At this moment there is being prepared a proclamation of American neutrality. This would have been done even if there had been no neutrality statute on the books, for this proclamation is in accordance with international law and in accordance with American policy.

This will be followed by a Proclamation required by the existing Neutrality Act. And I trust that in the days to come our neutrality can be made a true neutrality. . . . We seek to keep war from our own firesides by keeping war from coming to the Americas.

7. Charles A. Beard, "The Neutrality Deadlock," *Events*, September, 1939, pp. 161 ff.

For that we have historic precedent that goes back to the days of the administration of President George Washington. . . . This nation will remain a neutral nation, but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well. I have said not once but many times that I have seen war and that I hate war. I say that again and again. I hope the United States will keep out of this war. I believe that it will. And I give you assurance and reassurance that

Two days later, September 5, the President issued his neutrality proclamations: one under general international law and another under the Neutrality Act of 1937, which provided for an embargo on arms and munitions. His oft-repeated prophecy that a more terrible war was coming had been fulfilled. That was now beyond debate. But what of the future of the United States?

On September 13, 1939, having already entered into personal communication with Winston Churchill, then serving in the British Admiralty,⁹ President Roosevelt called Congress in an extraordinary session. In his message to Congress on September 21, he made an argument for the repeal of the embargo on munitions in line with the plea of Secretary Hull on July 14 and reassured Congress and the nation again that his primary objective was to protect the neutrality of the United States and keep the country out of war:

At the outset I proceed on the assumption that every member of the Senate and of the House of Representatives, and every member of the Executive Branch of the Government, including *the President and his associates, personally and officially are equally and 'without reservation in favor of such measures as will protect the neutrality, the safety and the integrity of our country and at the same time keep us out of war.*

H. *Public Papers*, 1939 Vol., pp. 460 ff.

<). For Mr. Churchill's account of this exchange of messages, see *London*

Because I am wholly willing to ascribe an honorable desire for peace to those who hold different views from my own as to what those measures should be, I trust that these gentlemen will be sufficiently generous to ascribe equally lofty purposes to those with whom they disagree.

Let no man or group in any walk of life assume exclusive protectorate over the future well-being of America, because I conceive that regardless of party or section *the mantle of peace and of patriotism is wide enough to cover us all.*

Let no group assume the exclusive label of the "peace bloc." We all belong to it. . . .

For many years the primary purpose of our foreign policy has been that this nation and this Government should strive to the utmost to aid in avoiding war among nations. But if and when war unhappily comes, *the Government and the nation must exert every possible effort to avoid being drawn into the war.*

The Executive Branch of the Government did its utmost, *within our traditional policy of non-involvement*, to aid in averting the present appalling war. Having thus striven and failed, *this Government must lose no time or effort to keep our nation from being drawn into the war. In my candid judgment we shall succeed in these efforts. . . .*

I seek a greater consistency through the repeal of the embargo provisions, and a return to international law. I seek reenactment of the historic and traditional American policy which, except for the disastrous interlude of the Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts, has served us well from the very beginning of our Constitutional existence.

It has been *erroneously said that return to that policy might bring us nearer to war. I give to you my deep and unalterable conviction*, based on years of experience as a worker in the field of international peace, *that by the repeal of the embargo the United States will more probably remain at peace than if the law remains as it stands today.* I say this because with the repeal of the embargo *this Government clearly and definitely will insist that American citizens and American ships keep away from tint immediate perils of the actual zones of conflict. . . .*

These perilous days demand cooperation among us without trace of partisanship. *Our acts must be guided by one single hard headed thought—keeping America out of this war. In that*

I am asking the leaders of the two major parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives to remain in Washington between the close of this extraordinary session and the beginning of the regular session on January 3, 1940. They have assured me that they will do so, and I expect to consult with them at frequent intervals on the course of events in foreign affairs and on the need for future action in this field, whether it be executive or legislative action.

I should like to be able to offer the hope that the shadow over the world might swiftly pass. I cannot. The facts compel my stating, with candor, that darker periods may lie ahead. The disaster is not of our making; no act of ours engendered the forces which assault the foundations of civilization. Yet we find ourselves affected to the core; our currents of commerce are changing, our minds are filled with new problems, our position in world affairs has already been altered.

In such circumstances our policy must be to appreciate in the deepest sense the true American interest. Rightly considered, this interest is not selfish. Destiny first made us, with our sister nations on this Hemisphere, joint heirs of European culture. Fate seems now to compel us to assume the task of helping to maintain in the Western World a citadel wherein that civilization may be kept
.dive. *The peace, the integrity and the safety of the Americas—
these must be kept firm and serene* 10

During the congressional discussions of proposed modifications in the neutrality legislation, including the repeal of the embargo on munitions-selling and the introduction of other provisions, the familiar types of argument were related or repeated, with variations. On behalf of changes in the law, it was said that they would be more effective in keeping the country out of the war and that the purpose of President Roosevelt in advocating them was to maintain neutrality and peace for the United States. In opposition to terrain modifications, especially the embargo repeal, it was vowed that they were steps on the road to war and that President Roosevelt, like Woodrow Wilson in 1917, was leading the country on the way to war.

Thus supporters of President Roosevelt's policy and opponents of that policy were united on a basic principle: the neutrality of the United States must be maintained and the country kept out of the war then raging. And for long weeks they hammered this principle into the minds of American citizens.

Typical views expressed by advocates of modifications in the neutrality legislation, especially the repeal of the munitions embargo, during the debates in the House of Representatives, follow:

Representative Luther A. Johnson, Democrat, of Texas:

. . . we are receiving letters demanding that we make no change in the present law and in that way keep us out of war. If the present partial neutrality law is not changed or amended, the United States is certain to be in this war, and that within a very short time.

President Roosevelt is to be commended for acting promptly on the outbreak of war in Europe by calling Congress into special session to pass an adequate and a complete neutrality law to safeguard in every way our interests and to prevent our involvement in the war. It is not the fault of President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull that such legislation was not passed at the last session of Congress. If Congress had passed such a bill at the last session of Congress, there would have been no necessity for this session of Congress and there is a possibility that there might not be any war at this time in Europe. . . .

Some of these opponents charge that the President is trying to get us into war because he is suggesting changes in the present partial and wholly inadequate neutrality law. This is in line with the charge made by the same gentlemen at the last session of Congress when President Roosevelt was trying to have legislation passed. When he talked about war being imminent and need for neutrality legislation they called him a war-monger, and stated that he was simply stirring up strife and that there was no likelihood of any war. Now, when war has broken out and he tries to get legislation to keep us out of war, they say he is simply doing that, not to keep us out of war, but to get us into war. . . .

The resolution now being considered is an improvement . . .

and in my judgment should be less objectionable and be more effective in keeping us out of war. . . .

Those who think that an arms embargo alone to belligerent nations will keep us out of war have not given thoughtful consideration to this subject. I assert, Mr. Speaker, that the retention of the arms embargo will not keep us out of war, and its repeal will not get us into war. . . .¹¹

Representative Sol Bloom, Democrat, of New York:

The aim of all neutrality legislation has been to keep the country out of war. No matter how many points are covered, no matter what is put in or left out, no law is good if it falls short of what law can do to keep us out of war. The best that any country can do is to deal with realities and shape its course accordingly, for the purpose of maintaining its peace.

Regardless of differences of opinion as to details, Congress reflects the determination of the people to avoid war. . . .

When House Joint Resolution 306 was passed by this body last June there was peace in Europe. . . . It was contended at that time that repeal of the embargo upon arms, ammunition, and implements of war would have a tendency to encourage foreign war into which the United States might be drawn. . . .

Undoubtedly many Members of the House voted to retain the embargo in the belief that they were helping to maintain peace in Europe. . . . Unfortunately for these Members, and unfortunately for the world, war did break out. The retention of the embargo did not stop it. . . .

If there was any reason to hope that the embargo would tend to prevent the outbreak of war in Europe, that hope no longer exists. We are now dealing with actual war conditions abroad. We are trying to avoid being drawn in. We are keeping all American ships and citizens from the areas of warfare.¹²

Representative R. L. Doughton, Democrat, of North Carolina:

11. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 1939), 338-339.

12. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 1939), 1119 ff.

We were told by those who opposed the removal of the embargo, in the last session of the Congress, that it would prevent war, and that as long as it was maintained there would be no war in Europe. These same persons now tell us that unless the embargo is kept intact it will constitute a first step that will lead to our involvement. Their first prediction did little to advance their reputation as prophets, and their opposition, resulting as it did in inaction on this important question, in my opinion, undoubtedly was a contributing factor to the outbreak of war in Europe.

In the meantime, both our great President and our capable Secretary of State warned that a European war was likely, and might break with little notice. They urged that we prepare our selves by removing from our statutes the present ineffectual neutrality legislation, and replacing it with something along the lines of the pending bill. Persons from every walk of life, without regard to partisan policies and their positions upon other very controversial questions, concurred in this opinion. . . .

In conclusion, I repeat, the controlling desire of all of us is to keep our country from becoming involved in the war in Europe. Our great President and Secretary of State, who have larger official responsibilities and also a better and more thorough knowledge of all factors relating thereto, have urged and recommended the policy outlined in the pending bill.

In my judgment, their position has the endorsement and support of an overwhelming majority of the American people without regard to political affiliations or connections. From North, South, East, and West come conclusive evidence of such support, and it is my studied, deliberate, and confident belief that the enactment of the pending measure will be taking the safest course possible at this time to promote and safeguard the peace, well being, and happiness of the American people.¹³

Representative Mary Norton, Democrat, of New Jersey:

... It is my confident belief that the proposed neutrality act will be the means of keeping us free, that America shall remain at peace. This is now and shall continue to be my most fervent prayer.

13. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 2 (November 1, 1939), 1193.

May I say to my colleagues, as one who went through a World War, who saw all of its horrors, who worked day and night in the interest of our boys, that I would not stand here today and urge that we repeal the present Neutrality Act if it were not my honest conviction that it is the best way to keep us out of war. I sincerely hope that my colleagues, however they may vote today upon the question of the best means to keep us neutral, will join with me in telling the women of America that this Congress, by its vote, will never consent to send American boys to fight in a European war.¹⁴

Representative J. W. Wadsworth, Republican, of New York:

There can be no doubt, however, that an overwhelming majority of our people expect the Congress to enact legislation which, if legislation can do it at all, will keep us from being involved in the present conflict. I believe the Senate bill approaches this difficult problem in a realistic way. . . . I believe the Senate in its cash- and-carry provision at least approaches this difficult problem realistically and that if legislation can keep us out of war, this particular provision will do more in this direction than any other provision that can be drafted. . . .^{14a}

Illustrations of the views set forth in the House of Representatives by opponents of President Roosevelt's foreign policy, as exemplified in his call for modifications of the embargo provisions, are given in the following excerpts from the debates:

Representative Louis Ludlow, Democrat, of Indiana.

Mr. Speaker, in this country of ours we have two ideologies in respect to war. Those ideologies have come to the point where they are clashing violently and where America must choose between them. If we adopt as our permanent policy one ideology,

14. *Ibid.*, p. 1192.

14a. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 2 (November 2, 1939), 1311.

sometimes contemptuously referred to as “isolation,” but which is not isolation at all, we may safely count on remaining at peace with the world. If we adopt as our policy the other ideology, the interventionist ideology, it will simply be a question of time when it will drag us into war.

I have said that isolation is a misnomer, and it is. The isolation ideology does not suggest or even intimate that America should isolate itself from the world. It merely suggests that we should isolate ourselves from the wars that are eternally brewing in the cockpit of Europe and in other foreign trouble areas of the globe. This we are fortunately able to do because of our detached geographical position. . . .

The Bloom so-called neutrality bill . . . runs counter to the general wish of our people that America should keep out of war. It is a shining example of the interventionist ideology. It is based on the theory that it is to the best interest of the United States to line up on the side of certain great powers and against certain other great powers. It would plunge America into power politics up to the hilt. No candid champion of the bill, however ardently he might favor it, ever claimed that it is a neutrality bill. Its proponents frankly admit that it is a bill in the interest of England and France, and its effect would be to make America an ally of the British Empire and France in any future war in which they choose to engage, because it would establish the United States as the arsenal and storehouse of supplies and credits for those countries that control the seas. . . .

We can never keep out of war if we have an enormous stake in the game. Our stake must be in peace and not in war, if we are to remain safe and secure. . . ,¹⁵

Representative V. F. Harrington, Democrat, of Iowa:

Only one consideration is facing us today: The best way to keep us out of war. Last June the House said to the world: “We think the best way to keep from becoming involved in any war is to keep the arms embargo.” We voted to retain it. This embargo principle had been established as a national policy over a period of four years, and we reaffirmed it only ninety days ago.

15. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 16, 1939), 485 f.

The world was then at peace. Now, great nations are at war. I believe that if we try to change the law now, after war has been declared, we will commit an act of unfriendliness—yes, an act of aggression, if you please, and I would be opposed to the embargo today if a gigantic and cruel war were not in progress. That was my opinion last June and is my opinion today. Change the law then? Yes; a thousand times. Change it now? Ten thousand times no.¹⁶

Representative E. M. Dirksen, Republican, of Illinois:

They say that the arms embargo of itself is not important and that of itself it will not involve us in war or keep us wedded to peace. If that be true, why were we called here to repeal it?

... If the arms embargo is unimportant, who will contend that it will involve us in war? If the arms embargo is unimportant, who will contend that it will shatter the peace we now enjoy? If

the arms embargo is unimportant, why does not the President announce to the Nation and to the world that it is unimportant, and then and there pass it by as befits the agenda of a busy man? ...

By the very force of the drive for its repeal, they have bestowed dignity upon the issue and persuaded the American people as nothing else could have done that it is important. The argument answers itself. ... I like the candor with which Senator Austin,

of Vermont, Senator Burke, of Nebraska, have spoken on the subject. Their observations were stripped of all pretense. Frankly they averred that the arms embargo should be repealed that we might affirmatively aid one side in the present conflict. ... It is

not a case of neutrality. It is not a case of whether under all concepts of international law and the precedents of our own State Department we do or do not have a lawful right to do so. It is not a case of stimulating employment or aiding national defense.

It is not a case of returning to international law. It is not because the embargo violates international law or impairs our peaceful relations with other countries. The case for repeal consists of a policy of giving every possible aid and assistance to one side in the present controversy without actually being embroiled in

is where the issue is finally joined. Those who favor repeal of the embargo are willing to gamble with that chance. Those who oppose the repeal of the embargo are persuaded that it is the first step on the road to a baptism of blood for the youth of America.¹⁷

Representative Dewey Short, Republican, of Missouri:

Sir, we who want the embargo on arms, munitions, and implements of war retained do not claim its repeal would immediately lead us into another conflict but we are convinced in our own minds, "amateurish" as they are, and are forcibly told by the consciences that we possess, that repeal would be the first step on the road that leads ultimately to involvement. It is not the last blow that is struck, but the first one that usually precipitates a battle. Woodrow Wilson was a man of high ideals and certainly did not want America to be dragged into the last World War, but the initial steps taken by our Government with all their unpredictable eventualities finally led him against his own will into the conflict.

Last Thursday night, Mr. Roosevelt said, "the United States, as I have said before, is neutral and does not intend to get involved in war." ¹⁸ Mr. Speaker, I wish to call the attention of all Members to the word "intend." After all, our intentions and motives do not count for as much as the practical and inevitable results of our acts. I repeat, sir, that none of us wants this Nation to go to war, . . . but by taking certain steps—and the repeal of the arms embargo is one of these steps—we shall be led inexorably and inescapably into the heart of the conflict. Are we who honestly and conscientiously believe this way to be branded as

Representative J. W. Ditter, Republican, of Pennsylvania:

Those who oppose lifting the embargo believe that a program of neutrality is the pathway to peace, and that it conforms to the long-established policy urged upon us in the early life of the

¹⁷ *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 27, 1939), 1045-1047.

¹⁸ Below, p. 261.

¹⁹ *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 2 (November 1, 1939), 1167.

Republic to avoid “entangling alliances.” Such a program we believe is one of realism rather than idealism. It profits by our past experiences instead of gambling on future experiments. It restrains us from attempting another enthusiastic enterprise “to make the world safe for democracy” or to engage in “a war to end war.” . . . We are convinced that our intervention in the quarrels of Europe will neither cure the ills nor remove the causes. We believe that our duty at home is greater by far than our responsibility abroad. We believe that the peace of America is something more than to be hoped for. We believe it must be planned for—and that plan, we believe, must rest upon an impartial treatment of all belligerents.²⁰

The following extracts from the debates in the Senate on modifications in the neutrality legislation show how supporters of President Roosevelt’s proposal in that chamber expressed the principle that the purpose of the project was to keep the country out of war.

Senator Tom Connally, Democrat, of Texas:

Mr. President, our objective, and our only objective, is to keep out of this terrible war. We are not responsible for it. God knows if the American people could have had any influence, it would never have occurred. . . .

We want to keep out of the war. What is the most practical, the most sensible, and the plainest course for us to pursue? I submit, Mr. President, that the joint resolution gives the greatest possible assurance of any measure that can be devised by any legislative body. It makes sacrifices, it makes sacrifices of our shipping and entails sacrifices upon our people greater than have ever been made by any people in all the history of warfare, . . . We are doing it willingly; we are doing it as a domestic regulation; we are doing it in order to save the necessity for facing the issue as to involvement or non-involvement in the war. We want to stay out of the war, and we are going just as far as any people can go in this legislation to stay out of the war.²¹

20. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 2 (November 2, 1939), 1304.

21. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 4, 1939), 92.

Senator L. B. Schwellenbach, Democrat, of Washington:

At first blush it is apparently a perfectly logical thing to say, "I believe in peace; therefore I believe that our Government should stop the export of arms, ammunition, and implements of war to any belligerent nation." But when we come to a realization that by that act our Government takes on an obligation which the authorities at least agree is more likely to get us into war than any other policy or process that we might use, then certainly we must pause and hesitate. . . .

Another phrase has also attracted the attention of our people. It was the one given over the radio by the very distinguished and brilliant and eloquent Senator from Idaho [Mr. Borah]: "This is the first step toward war." All the arguments and all the oratory since have been based upon it. I know that neither the Senator from Idaho nor anyone else in opposition to the pending joint resolution consciously believes or consciously argues that those of us who believe in the joint resolution have any intention of taking this Nation toward war. If we did have, certainly we would not have presented the Pittman joint resolution, which not only is not a step toward war but, in my opinion, is the most orderly and complete retreat from war that any nation has ever taken. . . .

Mr. President, I receive mail each day accusing the President of the United States of wanting to take this first step to get us into war, and then plan on other steps. . . . Do you think that if we had some ambition to take the first step toward war we would have attempted to write into our statutes the most completely restrictive statute that this or any other nation ever saw to prevent us from getting into war?

So I believe the objections which have been advanced to the repeal of the arms embargo, when analyzed in the light of the experience of this country and the experience and knowledge of the neutral nations of the world, fall to the ground. It is not a changing of rules after the game begins. It is not the first step toward war. It is not a matter of becoming an arsenal for one side with the danger of becoming a target for the other. It is a careful, painstaking effort to try to keep this Nation out of war.²²

Senator Robert Wagner, Democrat, of New York:

After the most careful study of the legislative details which divide us, I am convinced that the changes in our neutrality law reported by the committee give the best promise of keeping America out of war and keeping war away from America. . . . I am indeed mindful of the sincerity and earnestness with which the embargo provision has been supported by able and distinguished Senators; but I find myself unable to agree either that the arms embargo represents the moral judgment of the American people, our indispensable defense against war, or the symbol of our neutrality. . . .

In closing, Mr. President, I sincerely believe that the deep yearning of all America for uninterrupted peace will be fully realized through the enactment of the joint resolution under consideration. But even within the framework of that law, incidents may arise and propaganda will undoubtedly be forthcoming to disturb our peaceful pursuits and shake our neutral purpose. In the difficult times that lie ahead, increased measures for national defense and unswerving unity of national effort will keep this Nation in the path of peace. Under the experienced and inspiring leadership of a President who has proved equal to every crisis, we face calmly what the future may bring, secure in our democratic strength and confident in our national destiny.²³

Senator E. R. Burke, Democrat, of Nebraska:

. . . Repeal of the arms embargo will, therefore, not operate equally. To defend repeal upon that ground alone does not carry conviction. For myself, I have crossed that bridge. I speak no more of repeal of the arms embargo as an expression of strict neutrality, for it is not that. It checks the belligerent who now has a great advantage, takes that advantage away, and checks the belligerent which I, speaking for myself personally, want checked. It favors the belligerents that I want favored, by giving (hem the chance of coming here with their ships and buying our goods. However, I base my defense of repeal not on these preferences. We should repeal the arms embargo and adopt the other

provisions of the substitute, with some minor modifications, be cause such action will greatly further the best interests of the United States. . . . There are many reasons why this is so. I shall now set forth a few of them.

First, this policy gives the largest measure of assurance attainable that we will not become involved in the war.

There is no doubt of the overwhelming desire of Americans to remain out of war. I respect the views of all who differ from me as to the best method of accomplishing that end. At the same time, I resent the statement or implication by anyone that those with whom they do not agree are trying to take us into war. As matters stand today, there is not the remotest possibility that we will ever send another American expeditionary force to Europe. Certainly no person of sense wants to do that or desires that this country should take any direct part in the war that is now under way or in any foreign war.

It is whispered that the President is consciously moving in the direction of war, that Secretary Hull is favorable to such a course, that some Senators and others are willing that such action should follow. That is calumny of the basest sort. . . .

Mr. President, we are justified in proceeding on the assumption that Congress, the Chief Executive, all of our people, are united in a common purpose to protect the safety and integrity of our country and keep us out of war. How is the pending measure adapted to secure that result?

First, by going to extreme lengths in keeping American ships, American citizens, and American goods out of danger zones. . . .

Second, repeal of the arms embargo will shorten the war. I have no doubt that in the end the democracies will prevail in their struggle against the totalitarian powers, whatever action we take. But without repeal it may easily be a long-drawn-out war, costly in human life and in the destruction of the accumulated values of centuries of effort. Moreover, the longer the war lasts the greater the danger of our involvement. Every day that the war is shortened means just that much less possibility of our participation. . . .²⁴

Senator Francis Maloney, Democrat, of Connecticut:

²⁴ *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 11, 1939), 290.

At the moment some good people of our country are going through a period of hysteria. Added up, or boiled down, however, the unanimous desire and demand is that we take the path away from war. . . .

It is my opinion that the pending measure will in no way increase the danger to us, while almost all admit that there are features of it which add to our protection against war. . . .

I have patiently waited for an argument which might, even to a slight degree, strengthen the contention that the passage of the joint resolution would be the first step toward war. That presentation is still delayed, and my own conviction becomes the stronger. . . .

Let me say at this time, Mr. President, that if there is reason for any nations in Europe to believe, or to entertain the serious hope, that at some later date we may enter this war, no ground for such belief has been afforded by those who favor repealing the arms embargo. The encouragement, if there is any—and I hope t here is none—has been given, unintentionally, of course, by those who are opposed to the pending measure.²⁵

Senator W. R. Austin, Republican, of Vermont:

I think one of the marked differences in the approach to the problem before us, and the widest cleavage we find between those who favor the joint resolution and those who oppose it, is the assumption which is now made by the distinguished Senator from Michigan; namely, that the citizens of the United States and their representatives in the Congress of the United States are no longer free agents; that they are no longer intelligent; that they no longer are men of character and fidelity; and that they are in capable of putting restrictions and regulations upon commerce which commonly goes free without taking another step and
•ending our boys across the sea.

That is the grave difference in attitude between us; and it is a difference upon which we will never agree, for I believe that those who favor the joint resolution are as eager and firm in their decision that our boys shall not be sent across the sea to do battle ns any group in the United States. What is more, I believe that

they have character enough and fidelity enough to truth to carry out that purpose, and that they are not so helpless that they must be dragged in. Dragged in by whom? You cannot have war with us unless you attack us, unless we are willing to declare war—and we are unwilling to declare war. When it comes to a matter of defense, we are not obliged to cross the seas with armed forces to defend ourselves. Our plan does not involve that.²⁸

Senator J. E. Murray, Democrat, of Montana:

Mr. President, if the American people in this war maintain their neutrality, not on a basis of taking sides but on a just and legal basis—a basis which conforms to international law as we have known it for hundreds of years—no belligerent nation can justly take offense. If we do this, I believe it is as certain as any event of such nature can be certain that sooner or later this country will be asked to exercise its good offices for peace. When that time comes, it will not be difficult for the President of the United States to suggest the terms which will establish justice between the warring countries, and, in fact, between all the nations of the Old World. . . .

I think it must be manifest to any impartial, intelligent American, to any student of the realities of the situation, that the Pittman joint resolution presents the correct American policy of neutrality. 27

Senators opposed to President Roosevelt's request for a repeal of the embargo on munitions took cognizance of numerous pronouncements made by the President and his supporters in Congress, which assured the country that their purpose was *to maintain neutrality* and peace for the United States; but they insisted that he and his supporters were in fact pursuing in this respect a course that would inevitably lead to an involvement of the United States in war.

Excerpts from speeches delivered in the Senate setting forth the opposition views follow:

26. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 19, 1939), 600.

27. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 26, 1939), 911.

Senator W. E. Borah, Republican, of Idaho:

Our Secretary of State, Mr. Hull, has declared, speaking of the act of August 1935: "The Neutrality Act of last August, in embargoing exports of finished war commodities to belligerents, was to keep us out of war."

If the purpose of the Embargo Act then was to keep us out of war, what is the purpose of repealing it; to get us into war? Oh, no; I would not say the purpose but the inevitable effect of repealing it, in my judgment, would be to get us into war. If the enactment of it, as stated by the distinguished Secretary, was to keep us out of war, what kind of logic is it that says its repeal will keep us out of war?

We passed this law because we wanted to stay out of European conflicts. . . .

I am following the course which I am following solely because of my desire to stay out of the European war. I can see nothing in this program contributing to the cause of peace. On the other hand, it seems clear to me that we are moving rapidly to participating in this war. Arms, munitions, and implements of war are things with which to fight, to destroy life, to win battles; they are fit for nothing else. To furnish these things in the midst of a war to the advantage of one side or with the intent of assisting one side, is to help in the destruction of life and to win battles. All

the debates in the world, in parliament, or on the stump, will have no effect as against the passion, the deep-seated war spirit of those who are on the field. To them the manufacturer, the salesman, the carrier, all who participate in getting the instrumentalities to the scene of conflict, will be regarded and treated as enemies. We will be in the war from the time the machinery is set in motion

Senator A. H. Vandenberg, Republican, of Michigan.

... In the midst of foreign war and the alarms of other wars, we are asked to depart basically from the neutrality which the American Congress has twice told the world, since 1935, would be our rule of conduct in such event. We are particularly asked to depart

18. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 1939) 69 A-

from it through the repeal of existing neutrality law establishing an embargo on arms, ammunition, and implements of war. We are asked to depart from it in violation of our own officially asserted doctrine, during the World War, that the rules of a neutral can not be prejudicially altered in the midst of a war. We are asked to depart from international law itself, as we ourselves have officially declared it to exist. Consciously or otherwise, but mostly consciously, we are asked to depart from it in behalf of one belligerent whom our personal sympathies largely favor, and against another belligerent whom our personal feelings largely condemn. In my opinion, this is the road that may lead us to war, and I will not voluntarily take it.

Mr. President, millions of Americans, including many Members of the Congress, believe—rightly or wrongly—this action not only breaks down our will to peace but also relatively faces toward our involvement in this war. Therefore millions of Americans and many Members of the Congress, regardless of their belligerent sympathies, earnestly oppose the inauguration of such a trend. The proponents of the change vehemently insist that their steadfast purpose, like ours, is to keep America out of the war, and their sincere assurances are presented to our people. But the motive is obvious, and the inevitable interpretation of the change, inevitably invited by the circumstances, will be that we have officially taken sides. . . .

No matter how earnestly the proponents of the change may seek to cushion it for peace, and they have made every effort, the cold, stark fact of fundamental change itself remains. No matter what new insulating devices are created, the greatest of all protections against our involvement is stricken down. Of course, it is not intended as a step toward war. But definitely, under existing circumstances, it is not and cannot be a step toward peace. The consequences . . . are a monstrous speculation. . . .

. . . I do not speak of peace at any price. I reject that doctrine as wholly un-American. I speak of peace only at the price of scrupulous neutrality and an incorrigible effort to maintain it. While perfecting the national defense of a people that shall be invincible in the righteousness of their democracy, I simply plead that peace shall have the benefit of every doubt.

This brings us squarely to the pending issue. Are we less likely to become involved in this new World War and its consequence.

if we faithfully maintain the neutrality code which we said two years ago would govern our attitudes in the event of alien war, and if, under this code, we refuse all arms, ammunition, and implements of war to all belligerents? That is one point. Or are we less likely to become involved if we change the code, for the admitted benefit of one belligerent against the other, and if we become armorers for one against the other?

It seems to me that the question answers itself. I cannot escape the profound conviction that the change must inevitably be less safe, less insulated, less calculated to achieve the American detachment to which we all say we are devoted. I do not say repeal precipitates us into war. That is not necessary to prove my point, say that as between the two alternative courses available to us as to arms, ammunition, and implements of war it must obviously be relatively safer for America to pursue neutrality precisely as we solemnly declared two years ago we intended to pursue it under the same circumstances as we confront today; . . .

But from whatever viewpoint the problem is assessed, Mr. President, I find myself always driven back to the proposition that no matter what else is involved in this bill, the repeal of the arms embargo, which is the all-controlling symbol of an attitude, is not the way to encourage America's non-involvement in this war and in all of its disastrous consequences. Because of the reasons I signed to repeal, it is the way, rather, to encourage ourselves to progressively believe that our appropriate national course is to tie our destiny with one belligerent against the other and to progressively act upon that theory as our favorite's subsequent vicissitudes may require. That is not the road to peace.²⁹

Senator H. C. Lodge, Republican, of Massachusetts:

Most of those who urge me to repeal the embargo, however, do so because they want to help England and France by safely selling them supplies, while not wanting to do so strongly enough to place the whole distance. These people are perfectly willing to abandon neutrality because of their belief that by helping England and France they will promote the peace of the United States. . . .

²⁹9. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 11919): 95, 98, 103-

They further contend that repeal of the embargo will promote peace for America on the ground that if England and France “crack,” we will surely enter the war; we should, therefore, help them to win in order to keep ourselves out. I submit that the chances of England and France being defeated are slim indeed. The choice seems to be between a defeat of Germany on the one-hand and a stalemate on the other. I further contend, however, that even if Germany were victorious and desired to conquer the United States, she never could do so. No European power can occupy or vanquish the United States, and it is fanciful to suggest that it could. Fortunately, our national safety is not at stake. . . . We should wait to repeal the embargo until the first overt act has been committed against us. Let us then use repeal of the embargo as a weapon of military strategy and as an act of self defense. When we have done so, let us follow it up with still
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direct and effective measures. If a great and damaging overt act is committed against America, we should not only give out Allies groceries on a cash-and-carry basis; we should jump in with both feet and fight for our country and our God shoulder to shoulder with them. Not for us will be a vacillating policy called “short of war”; not for us will there exist a counsel of being halt in and half out, of bringing in by the back door what we are ashamed of at the main gate; . . . No! Once the war becomes our war, whether for economic, military, or moral grounds, let us get into it, and get really in. But until we have cause to get in.

Senator B. C. Clark, Democrat, of Missouri:

. . . when I see that . . . there is an attempt to throw over the embargo provision which we know from experience is an absolutely necessary safeguard if we are going to erect adequate bulwarks against involvement in war, I cannot keep silent. I must lift my voice in protest against any efforts on the part of anyone to enact a policy that in any degree increases our chances of getting into war.

. . . I will tell you why we must keep the arms embargo. In the first place, it keeps us from engaging in the bloody, unholy,

30. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 10, 1939), 250.

unmoral business of being an arsenal for death-dealing weapons, dealing in instruments of death. Furthermore, Mr. President, it is necessary to keep the arms embargo to all belligerents, because the armaments trade is the one trade which depends most on war for profits. . . . We must keep the arms embargo, because we adopted the embargo on arms to all belligerents in 1935 and reenacted it in 1936 and 1937 as our national policy, as a strong protective measure to insure our peace; . . . because we did not want to permit the growth of a vested interest in the armaments trade which would inevitably endanger the determination of the country to keep out of foreign war.

I submit that the strongest protection for our people against involvement in war will be afforded by a strong cash-and-carry law in addition to the absolute ban on the sale or shipment of arms, ammunition, and implements of war. . . . Why can we not have both? We need both if we are to stay out of war. . . . On the one hand are those who believe that we can "eat our cake and keep it too," that we can actively aid Great Britain and France by measures short of war, and still avoid ultimate participation in the struggle. On the other side are those of us who believe that the relaxation of our policy of strict neutrality by the repeal of the arms embargo, and the establishment of the United States as a reservoir for slaughterhouse weapons is only the first step which must inevitably lead to war. . . .

There are, in this country, perfectly honorable and patriotic men and women who conceive that our interests are so inextricably interwoven with those of Great Britain and France and Ireland that we should step forward openly and frankly as a partner and ally. . . . With such a view I am in passionate disagreement, and I believe that the American people when they completely understand the issue will be in overwhelming disagreement. But, Mr. President, while I violently and completely dissent from the judgment, I respect such opinions when openly and candidly expressed.³¹

Senator G. P. Nye, Republican, of North Dakota:

When the question is, Is the arms embargo repeal a symbol of the first step on the part of the United States on a steady tramp,

31. (*Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 1939), 170, 275, 280.

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tramp, tramp into war program? then the answer is most definitely, "Yes"; again and again, "Yes." Any man who can give his mind and his time to an honest, open study of what trade in munitions did to the United States back in 1914, 1915, and 1916, and say that embargo repeal at this time is not symbolic, is utterly ignoring so well-written a record of truth that it is unfortunate. Mr. President, there is one lone issue in this debate, and it involves this question, Will helping the Allies keep us out of war?

The President thinks it will. I am sure it will not. . . .

I deny with all the emphasis at my command that helping the Allies is neutrality. Others have denied it. We affirm that embargo repeal is a step toward war. We deny that the British Navy and the French Army are America's first line of defense. We affirm that neutrality is our first line of defense. We deny that the United States can make the world safe from Hitlerism by becoming the silent partner of the British Empire. We affirm that America's participation in this war, in any form, would bring no more democracy, no more justice, no more lasting peace to Europe than our last credulous crusade "to make the world safe for

Senator W. J. Bulow, Democrat, of South Dakota:

To preserve the peace of our country, my administration contends that we should now repeal the arms embargo and sell guns and ammunition to fighting nations to be used for human destruction. It is contended that if we become a peddler of bullets, powder, and guns to other people, by so doing it will make America safe for peace. I cannot subscribe to that doctrine. The Congress enacted the Arms Embargo Act, which was signed by the President, committing this country to a policy of neutrality. . . . It is now proposed that we must repeal that act . . . It is contended that we must repeal the arms embargo and return to international law in order to safeguard our destiny of peace. . . .

Mr. President, if we repeal the Embargo Act it is our first step to war, and will be followed by other steps in quick succession that inevitably lead to participation on European battlefields. Within the memory of every one of us here we have had one sad

and costly experience in our attempt to settle European boundary disputes and have learned to our sorrow that that cannot be done.³³

Senator R. M. LaFollette, Progressive, of Wisconsin:

Air. President, I regard the issues presented in this legislation as of vital importance to the future of this Republic. I intend to discuss these issues at some length, but I shall first state them briefly: Repeal of the embargo, in the present circumstances, and the

••ale of arms, ammunition, and implements of war is a significant step toward participation in the European war.

The several discretionary loopholes in the pending joint resolution are sufficient to allow for incidents which may lead us into war.

It is not in the best interest of American democracy to gamble everything of value which we possess in return for some temporary profits together with a permanent participation in a post-war chaos most certain to be revolutionary in character. . . .

Mr. President, I am impressed by the fact that many people in official life in Washington justify the repeal of the arms embargo privately on the ground that our national interest requires a policy which will assure victory for Great Britain and France in this European war. This is the only real justification they give for repeal of the arms embargo. . . . They argue that we must like sides, to see one group of belligerents win. But once we take sides since war is declared, knowing we are taking sides, repeal will only be interpreted at home and abroad as an official act taken by our Government for the purpose of partial participation in the European war. . . .

Our patriotic course is clear. It is to stay out of Europe and the Indian East, which would drain our blood, our manhood, and our wealth forever. It is to concentrate on making democracy functional here in the last great industrial nation which has a chance of making it function in the modern machine world. . . .

We have a great opportunity to build up an intercontinental civilization in this hemisphere. We can provide an army and navy

abroad. We do not have to accept as the solution of our problems the employment resulting from trade produced by slaughter and destruction of human beings on another continent.

We can utilize our idle manpower, productive capacity, and idle capital to restore our natural-resource base; to rehabilitate and conserve our human resources; to develop our Nation and this great and rich hemisphere. Here is a program that will give us a dynamic America, and restore that equality of economic opportunity that characterized the development of our own physical frontier. Here is a program which gives this generation "a rendezvous with destiny" in this hemisphere instead of with death in some other.

I put this program up against the program of taking sides; against the program of selling arms; against the program of intervention in a long, weary war, which will probably end abroad in revolution, and, if we become involved, may end here in dictatorship.³⁴

Senator Arthur Capper, Republican, of Kansas:

Mr. President, I am opposed to the United States taking any part in the present European war. It is not our war. I am opposed to our taking the first step toward participation in this war, which is not our war. I am emphatically opposed to repeal of the arms embargo. . . . Repeal of the embargo unquestionably means involvement in the European controversy; it is the first step toward war. That is the main reason why I am opposed to repeal of the embargo against sale and shipment of arms, ammunition, and implements of war to nations at war. . . .

I do not want the United States dragged into the war, or bribed into the war with "cash and carry at a profit," or led into the war by the mistaken enthusiasm of some of our own leaders. There is just one safe place for the United States in this war and that is in the United States. I am convinced the surest way for us to keep out of involvement is to stay on our own ground and mind our own business, and selling arms, ammunition, and implements of war to be used in this war is not staying at home and minding our own business. . . .

In 1935, in 1936, President Roosevelt was in favor of United

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 321 ff.

States neutrality; he thought he was opposed to the United States taking part in Europe's wars. He wanted peace; he regarded neutrality as an essential part of a peace program.

But in 1937 the President's ideas on the part the United States should play in world affairs began to enlarge. He saw things going on in Europe that he did not like—and in that respect I will say that I myself and most other Americans had no more liking for these things than did President Roosevelt.

But President Roosevelt, who in 1936 saw in neutrality the true path for peace, and who saw in the arms embargo an effective expression of neutrality at least—President Roosevelt in 1937 felt an urge to meddle in European affairs. . . .

From that time on the United States was bound to pursue conflicting foreign policies. . . . As plainly it is difficult to maintain neutrality and at the same time take sides, of course it became necessary for the President to work for the repeal of the arms embargo, so that the Presidential urge to help Britain and France could be satisfied without violating the law of the land. . . .³⁵

Senator D. I. Walsh, Democrat, of Massachusetts:

Because a war crisis in Europe has actually developed it is now proposed that we repeal the measures heretofore made to resist our involvement. The present issue, therefore, is . . . Shall we change our policy of non-intervention to intervention—to the extent of supplying to one of the belligerents destructive war weapons? . . .

Mr. President, candor compels me to state that I think of nothing, now that war has swept over Europe, that threatens more mainly to involve us in the present holocaust than deliberately to reverse our present policy of positive refusal to sell war weapons to any or all belligerents, and by solemn enactment to alter the output of our munitions' factories for sale, knowing that only one group of belligerents can be our customer. No one being contends that we are morally bound to sell implements of war to any nation at any time. . . .

Instead of pleading here in the Senate of the United States for

¹*S. Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 11, 1939), 461, 462.

traffic in arms or war profits, we should be militantly resisting every possible step that will lead to traffic in human lives, the lives of the youths of America. . . .

Mr. President, who are those urging the repeal of our arms embargo aside from the Chief Executive and the State Department, whose motives, like our own, we concede to be actuated by what they conceive to be the best interests of the Nation? Others, however, disclose motives that seem to me to be based on other considerations than neutrality. I refer to those Americans who believe we should at once enter the war and who are for repeal of the arms embargo as the first step. They, of course, frankly concede they are opposed to the policy of neutrality. They are for war.³⁶

Senator Hiram Johnson, Republican, of California:

With embargo repeal we are half in and half out of war. We know from our bitter experience in the past how easy it will be to shove us along until we are fully in, and this is the nub of the matter. We will be shoved along and pushed about in relation to the present European war once we repeal the embargo, until we will not be sure where we stand or what we do. We will be pushed about and shoved along by those wily men who play the game of power politics, which some of our people, some of those who are snobbish, imagine they can play better than the diplomats of Europe, but when they indulge in the game of power politics with Europe they have as much chance as I would have trying to play poker with the Senator from Nevada. . . .

You may say that you will not go to war. You may say—and you may mean it—that you will not vote for a declaration of war, or to send a single boy across the sea. Who ever believed that we were sending 2,000,000 men across the sea when we voted for a declaration of war before? No! No! No! You must steel your hearts against the first false step. You must say to your selves that you will not take a single step toward war, or you will find you cannot resist when the time comes.³⁷

36. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 17, 1939) 494.

37. *Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. 85, Pt. 1 (October 20, 1939), 630, 631.

After the debate on neutrality had gone on for about a month, President Roosevelt intervened. On October 26, 1939, the President said in a radio broadcast:

In and out of Congress we have heard orators and commentators and others beating their breasts and proclaiming against sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. That I do not hesitate to label as one of the worst fakes in current history. It is a deliberate setting up of an imaginary bogey man. The simple truth is that no person in any responsible place in the national administration in Washington, or in any State Government, or in any city Government, or in any county Government, has ever suggested in any shape, manner or form the remotest possibility of sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe. That is why I label that argument a shameless and dishonest fake. . . .

The fact of the international situation—the simple fact, without any bogey in it, without any appeals to prejudice—is that the United States of America, as I have said before, is neutral and does not intend to get involved in war.³⁸

At length Congress yielded to the President's plea for the repeal of the munitions embargo in the interest of peace and neutrality for the United States, but it coupled with the repeal several stringent amendments which materially strengthened the neutrality legislation in other respects. The new bill was signed by President Roosevelt on November 4, 1939. In commenting later on actions of Congress, the President said: "The adoption of these recommendations offered greater safeguards than we had before to protect American lives and property from destruction and in that way tended to avoid the incidents and controversies likely to draw us into conflict, as they had done in the last World War."³⁹

Under the new Neutrality Act which permitted the sale of munitions to belligerents, President Roosevelt issued a

)K. *Public Papers*, 1939 Vol., pp. 556 f.

39. This comment appears in the Introduction to his *Public Papers*, 1939 Vol., p. xxxviii, dated July, 1941.

new proclamation of neutrality on the day he signed the bill, November 4, 1939; and on December 2, 1939, he issued a statement urging American airplane makers not to sell planes to nations guilty of bombing civilians. In this statement, he said: "The American Government and the American people have for some time pursued a policy of wholeheartedly condemning the unprovoked bombing and machine-gunning of civilian populations from the air. This Government hopes, . . . that American manufacturers and exporters of airplanes, aeronautical equipment and materials essential to airplane manufacture will bear this fact in mind before negotiating contracts for the exportation of these articles to nations obviously guilty of such unprovoked bombing." 40

The large vote cast in Congress for the new neutrality bill, despite the vigor and persistence of the opposition, indicated that the Democratic managers in the national legislature had affairs well in hand. The outcome had been foretold by an anonymous writer in an article which appeared in the scholarly British magazine, *Round Table*, September, 1939. This article, evidently prepared some time in advance of publication, that is before the war began, was entitled "America and the World Crisis." It made a bold prophecy: "If war is actually precipitated, President Roosevelt will call a special session of Congress . . . and will seek the practically guaranteed repeal of the arms embargo. . . . The full economic, industrial, agricultural resources of the United States would then be at the disposal of Great Britain . . . though perhaps on a 'cash and carry' basis." The article continued: "How, when, or whether the United States would actually be drawn into the conflict is, naturally, a question that cannot be answered, but if one is estimating

40. *Ibid.*, p. 589. At this time, Russia, under the pact with Hitler, had occupied Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and large parts of eastern Poland; and had also begun a war on Finland. On December 6, 1939, President Roosevelt, in greetings to Finland on the anniversary of its independence, voiced "the wholehearted esteem felt for them [the Finnish people] and their government by the people and government of the United States." *Public Papers*, 1939 Vol., p. 595.

the probabilities they are that the history of 1914-17 would be foreshortened and repeated . . . the precise pattern of participation might be very different from that of 1917, but it might be none the less effective.”⁴¹

Among the managers of the President’s cause in Congress, Senator James F. Byrnes was outstanding. It was generally recognized in Washington that the Senator had extraordinary powers and abilities in making compromises, adjustments, and an efficient distribution of executive patronage; and his services were appreciated as far away as London. In the issue for December, 1939, *Round Table* reported on the tactics employed in putting through the modification of the Neutrality Act: “In September, the President had Senator James F. Byrnes—a skilled and highly popular negotiator—poll his colleagues at their homes in all parts of the country by lavish use of the long-distance telephone. Striking early, Senator Byrnes obtained ample commitments to repeal of the embargo before ever the Senators returned to Washington for the special session. Similarly, practical methods were employed in the House, where the ‘solid south’ of Democratic representatives and the machine-controlled city blocs of representatives were all whipped into the party camp. . . . It was a triumph of sanity and legitimate political organization. . . .”⁴²

By the end of the fateful year 1939, in which the general war in Europe flamed up, basic guarantees of peace for the United States had been written into the record by President Roosevelt and supporters of his Administration.

In his message to Congress on July 14, incorporating formulas devised by Secretary Hull, the President had informed the American people that his purpose was to maintain the

41. Quoted in Porter Sargent’s *Getting Us into War* (Porter Sargent, 1941), p. 122.

42. Quoted in Sargent, *op. cit.*, pp. 204 f. Senator Byrnes was highly useful to President Roosevelt later: in qualifying the anti-war plank in the Democratic

neutrality of the United States and so shape his foreign policy as to keep the country out of war.

On September 3, after the European war had begun, in a broadcast to the nation, he had warned citizens against “falsely” talking about sending American armies to Europe and had vowed: “This nation will remain a neutral nation.”

In his message to Congress in September, calling for a repeal of the munitions embargo, he had informed the American nation that he and his associates in the Government were “equally and without reservation in favor of such measures as will protect the neutrality, the safety and the integrity of our country and at the same time keep us out of war,” and had informed the people that “Our acts must be guided by one single hard-headed thought—keeping America out of this war.”

Again and again during the debate that raged from June to November over modifications in the Neutrality Act, President Roosevelt and his supporters in Congress had assured and reassured the American people that their purpose was to preserve the neutrality of the United States and avoid being drawn into foreign wars.

In a radio broadcast to the country, October 26, 1939, while the issue of the embargo repeal was still pending, President Roosevelt had declared that the United States “is neutral and does not intend to get involved in war.”

After members of the opposition had many times asserted that a repeal of the embargo on munitions was a step in the direction of war and would lead in due time to the sending of American boys to fight on European battlefields, President Roosevelt had denounced them in severe language—in his broadcast of October 26. He had branded their assertion as “a shameless and dishonest fake.” He had invited the people’s trust by testifying that no responsible person in the Government had “ever suggested in any shape, manner or form the remotest possibility of sending the boys of American mothers

CHAPTER X

Peace Promises in the Election Year 1940

In terms of time, President Roosevelt's pronouncements on foreign policy in 1940 fell into four periods, each marked by special characteristics. The first extended from January 1 to the summer season of the party conventions. The second included June—when the Republican convention was held in Philadelphia, and July—when the Democratic convention met at Chicago. The third period ran from the end of July to early September, during which the President refrained from campaigning in the ordinary sense of the term, as if confident of winning the election without indulging in customary politics; while the Republican candidate, Wendell Willkie, was making political capital and raising the issue of “no war.” The fourth period opened on September 11 when the President, warned by his advisers against expecting easy victory by default, took to the stump, and it closed with his final campaign speeches on the eve of the balloting in November; in this period he made several speeches, some of them brief; while Mr. Willkie kept challenging him by assertions that his policy meant war for the United States.

President Roosevelt's declarations on foreign policy and war after the opening of the campaign season were in some respects framed to meet Mr. Willkie's charges that he was taking the country on the road to war—charges that grew more explicit and more vehement as election day drew nearer. On the other hand, Mr. Willkie's arguments and contentions were frequently shaped with reference to countering the President's replies and charges. In other words, all along reciprocal influences were at work giving form and point to campaign promises on both sides as allegations and denials, arraignments and contradictions proceeded apace amid the heated competition for the people's suffrages. But a weighing

or appraisal of these reciprocal influences involves judgments likely to be controversial at best. So, with a view to avoiding the possible introduction of such polemics, a plan of treating merely seriatim the peace pledges on both sides of the party battle, with reference to the special periods of the year, has been adopted for the following pages.

*President Roosevelt's Statements on Peace
Prior to the Democratic Convention*

Between January 1, 1940, and the meeting of the Democratic convention at Chicago in July, terrible events occurred in Europe; by the first of July Hitler's armies had flooded out in all directions; France had fallen; the British had been driven off the Continent and stood alone battling heroically for existence; Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and Norway had come under the sway of German tyrants; Italy had struck falling France in the hour of her deep distress; the utter triumph of the Axis Powers in Europe seemed imminent.

Although there had been a lull in the European war on the Western front after it began in September, 1939, signs that its fury would be soon renewed were on the horizon when President Roosevelt delivered his annual message to Congress on January 3, 1940. If there was to be a reversal of the foreign policy which he had hitherto espoused, the occasion seemed appropriate, but no such reversal was announced in the message.

It is true that he pleased internationalists by chiding "American ostriches in our midst" and remarking that "it is not good for the ultimate health of ostriches to bury their heads in the sand." And he referred, with impatience, to "those who wishfully insist, in innocence or ignorance, or both, that the United States of America as a self-contained unit can live happily and prosperously, its future secure, inside a high wall of isolation, while, outside, the rest of civilization and the commerce and culture of mankind are shattered."

At the same time, however, the President adhered strictly

to his old line of defense, neutrality, and peace for the United States. "I can understand," he said, "the feelings of those who warn the nation that they will never again consent to the sending of American youth to fight on the soil of Europe. But, as I remember, nobody has asked them to consent—*for nobody expects such an undertaking.*

"The overwhelming majority of our fellow citizens do not abandon in the slightest their hope and their expectation that the United States will not become involved in military participation in these wars. . . . there is a vast difference between keeping out of war and pretending that this war is none of our business.

"We do not have to go to war with other nations, but at least we can strive with other nations to encourage the kind of peace that will lighten the troubles of the world, and by so doing help our own nation as well.

"I ask that all of us everywhere think things through with the single aim of how best to serve the future of our own nation. . . . it becomes clearer and clearer that the future world will be a shabby and dangerous place to live in—yes, even for Americans to live in—if it is ruled by force in the hands of a few. . . ."

As if anticipating the partisan efforts of the campaign to divide the country into a war party and a peace party, the President spurned the tactics: "The time is long past when any political party or any particular group can curry or capture public favor by labeling itself the 'peace party' or the 'peace bloc.' That label belongs to the whole United States and to every right thinking man, woman, and child within it. . . .

"The first President of the United States warned us against entangling foreign alliances. The present President of the United States subscribes to and follows that precept." 1

Speaking to the Young Democratic Clubs on April 20, 1940, President Roosevelt told the members that "Your Government is keeping a cool head and a steady hand. We are

1. *Public Papers*, 1940 Vol., pp. 1 ff. (Italics supplied.)

keeping out of the wars that are going on in Europe and in Asia, but I do not subscribe to the preachment of a Republican aspirant for the Presidency who tells you, in effect, that the United States and the people of the United States should do nothing to try to bring about a better order, a more secure order, of world peace when the time comes.”

2

When he called on Congress for additional appropriations for national defense, May 16, 1940, the President said: “Our task is plain. The road we must take is clearly indicated. Our defenses must be invulnerable, our security absolute. . . . *Our ideal, yours and mine, the ideal of every man, 'woman, and child in the country—our objective is still peace—peace at home and peace abroad.* Nevertheless, we stand ready not only to spend millions *for defense* but to give our service and even our lives *for the maintenance of our American liberties.*” 3

In another message to Congress asking for additional appropriations for national defense, July 10, 1940, the President again assured the members: “That we are opposed to war is known not only to every American, but to every government in the world. We will not use our arms in a war of aggression; *we will not send our men to take part in European wars.* But, we will repel aggression against the United States or the Western Hemisphere.” 4

*Mr. Willkie's Statements on Peace Prior to
His Nomination by the Republicans*

Before the year 1940 had advanced far, it became known that a new contender had entered the lists for the Republi

2. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 204. (Italics supplied.)

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 288 f. (Italics supplied.) It may be noted here that on June 18, 1940, Mr. Willkie had declared in an address in Brooklyn: “. . . despite our whole-hearted sympathy for the Allied cause, we must stay out of war. . . . We do not intend to send men from the shores of this continent to fight in any war. . . .”

that a powerful organization was preparing to storm the Republican convention on his behalf. Mr. Willkie had been until recently a Democrat, not a Republican; and he was primarily a man of business, not of politics. His fundamental quarrel with President Roosevelt, such as it was at the moment, appeared to involve domestic policies affecting "big business," rather than foreign policies relative to peace and war.

Born and reared in Indiana in humble circumstances, Mr. Willkie had risen to distinction and wealth as a public utility lawyer. As the legal, or rather publicity, representative of a great utility concern, with offices in New York City, Mr. Willkie had come into a public collision with President Roosevelt over federal legislation and actions in respect of corporate interests, special and general. To Republicans who regarded President Roosevelt as an inveterate foe of "economic royalists," Mr. Willkie seemed to be a godsend, just the man to lead America's chosen people out of the New Deal wilderness, despite the fact that he had long been affiliated with the Democratic party. In "the instant need of things" they overlooked his record in matters of foreign policy, or perhaps deemed it negligible or accepted it as offering promises to interventionists.

At all events Mr. Willkie's record on the issue of foreign policy was known to students of public affairs. As if to make it doubly clear in history, he later described it in an article written in 1944 for John Temple Graves, columnist of the *Birmingham Age-Herald*, a leading Democratic paper in Alabama. In the opening paragraph of his letter, Mr. Willkie exulted in what he called a recent revival of interest in Woodrow Wilson, and declared that he was among those who had found their "first strong political ideology in devoted support of Wilson's gallant but tragic fight for the League of Nations." Thereupon Mr. Willkie recited at length a story of how year after year he had associated himself with Newton D. Baker, outspoken champion of President Wilson's internationalism, and had himself preached to

“all who would listen,” in his locality in Ohio, the doctrine that “only through such an instrumentality as the League [of Nations] could future wars be prevented.” 56

According to the recital in his article, Mr. Willkie had later, as a delegate to the Democratic national convention of 1924, zealously supported Mr. Baker in his valiant struggle to wring from the convention an endorsement of the League of Nations.⁸ “The story has an epilogue,” Mr. Willkie continued. He invited remembrance of the fact that Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt, while a candidate for the Democratic nomination in 1932, had “publicly repudiated the League of Nations.”⁷ He stated that he and other “Baker boys” there after started a movement to win the nomination for Mr. Baker —“the leader who almost alone through the dark isolationist twenties had fought consistently for world cooperation.” The Baker boys made a desperate effort at Chicago in 1932 to defeat Governor Roosevelt and nominate Mr. Baker; but they lost. As Mr. Willkie interpreted their defeat, John N. Garner, William Randolph Hearst, William G. McAdoo, Joseph Kennedy, and James A. Farley “got to gether,” and they were little interested in “world cooperation”; Governor Roosevelt, who had publicly denounced the League of Nations, won the nomination.

Air. Willkie closed his article of 1944 with a postscript. The Democratic party not only had rejected the League of Nations but after 1932 it had begun to violate Woodrow Wilson’s “philosophy of government”; that is, his emphasis on economic individualism. After his discomfiture in battles for the League of Nations and after President Roosevelt had gone in heavily for social reform by government action, Mr. Willkie dissociated himself from the Democratic party as then constituted and led or, to use his own words, “I left the

5. Reprinted in *The United States News*, September 8, 1944, with an introductory note by David Lawrence, an ardent interventionist, who was hostile to the “socialism” of the New Deal. See above, p. 100.

6. For an account of the nature of this contest in 1924, see above, pp. 50 ff.

7. For Governor Roosevelt’s repudiation of the League, February 2, 1931, see above, pp. 75 ff.

Democratic party—or, perhaps the Democratic party left me.”

It was, therefore, a strange political figure whom the Eastern Republicans put forward as an aspirant for the nomination early in 1940. Mr. Willkie had once been a stout and regular Democrat but he had not, like President Roosevelt, publicly cast off his allegiance to the League of Nations. His record on internationalism up until 1940 had been thoroughly satisfactory to those Republicans and Democrats who abhorred the New Deal and yet openly or secretly hoped for American intervention in the European war. But Mr. Willkie's chief rivals for the Republican nomination were known to be opposed to involvement in that war, if not outright isolationists, and during the weeks before the Republican convention assembled Air. Willkie laid before the country his own offerings on the theme of peace and war.

Writing early in the year 1940 on the subject of aiding the Allies at war with aggressors and at the same time keeping the United States out of war, Mr. Willkie declared that the double objective could be effected.

Now we have been sure for a great number of years that we don't want to have any part in anybody's war. We have had some wars of our own in the past. We now think we have outgrown them. If we and our neighbors on this hemisphere are left to ourselves, we can get along very nicely without any military activity. And we don't think that we should be called upon to settle the boundaries of a less fortunate continent. Also, we have a vague feeling that if the situation were reversed, if the hostilities were over here, we should not see any country in Europe coming over to stand beside us on the battle line. . . .

And, clearly, we have a right to lend, buy, sell, or borrow, with respect to any country we designate. We might well drop that right for the sake of peace. Yet we must remember that no foreign nation wants to have the U. S. as its enemy or will contrive to find a cause for hostility with this country. In fact, its tendency will be the other way—to overlook annoyances in the hope of keeping us neutral. If the aggressive countries today—

the U.S.S.R.,⁸ Germany, and Japan—were looking for quarrels to pick with the U. S., they could find plenty of excuses. The government, for instance, has encouraged the sale of military equipment to England and France. It has also expressed its vigorous opposition to certain of the policies of Germany, the U.S.S.R., and Japan. It has even gone so far as to call for a “moral embargo” against Japan. It has refused to recognize the state of Manchukuo, which the Japanese took from China, and it has similarly refused to recognize Germany’s conquest of Czecho slovakia or the conquest of Poland. It has withdrawn our Am bassador from Germany. . . . No one of those things involved us in a war, and neither will a loan to Finland, however the Finns use the money.

It does not seem to us that our foreign policy need be complicated by the obsessions of the extremists on either side. Our political foreign experts should get rid of the habit of whispering through the window and slipping things down the back alley. Our foreign policies should be forthright and clear. We are opposed to war. But we do not intend to relinquish our right to sell whatever we want to those defending themselves from aggression. And we are not so foolish as to believe that these sales of products at our ports, with our ships withdrawn from combat areas, can possibly involve us in hostilities.⁹

In a press interview, May 4, 1940, Mr. Willkie made the following statement on foreign policy, which was interpreted in some quarters as substantially identical with President Roosevelt’s:

. . . despite the views of the narrow isolationist, America does have a vital interest in the continuation in this world of the English, French and Norwegian way of life. *We must at all hazards*

8. Russia, associated by a pact with Hitler’s Germany, had been at war with Finland for some time. In February, 1940, President Roosevelt had said: “The Soviet Union, as everybody who has the courage to face the fact knows, is run by a dictatorship as absolute as any other dictatorship in the world. It has allied itself with another dictatorship, . . .” *Public Papers*, 1940 Vol., p. 93.

9. Wendell L. Willkie, “We, the People,” *Fortune*, XXI, 4 (April, 1940), p. 172.

stay out of war, but I doubt whether we will stay out of war merely by putting our head, like the ostrich, in the sand and allowing the democracies to be defeated in their fight against the totalitarian States. It may well be that the most effective way of us keeping out of this war will be by helping the democracies in every way possible, *within the limits of international law*.

Also, we should on all occasions as a nation give our complete moral support to the democracies, for if the totalitarian States prevail the odds are very substantial that we shall have to meet them in armed conflict when they have been victorious *over the democracies* and are truculent and strong.¹⁰

Speaking before the Indiana Bankers Association, May 15, 1940, Mr. Willkie warned his auditors against the dangers to “the American system of free enterprise” of a German victory in Europe and added: “I think it is fair to say that those who have the peace of America at heart must want to do *anything short of war* which would strengthen the forces of France, England, Holland and Belgium.”¹¹

While engaged in his quest for the nomination, Mr. Willkie, speaking at a “Hoosier” box supper in New York City, May 21, 1940, maintained that the only way the United States could avoid war was to build up its strength so that it would be respected abroad. “In my judgment,” he declared, “a man who thinks that the results in Europe will be of no consequence to him is a blind, foolish and silly man. . . . Hitler knows only strength. He will stand aghast when we start the wheels of our industry turning and put 10,000,000 men back to work.”¹²

According to a report of a press interview at the La Guardia airport, June 8, 1940, after his return from a western trip, Mr. Willkie took the stand that “isolation” necessarily involved a flat refusal to approve any aid whatever to the Allies. After thus reducing isolationism to these terms, he disclaimed any sympathy with it:

10. *New York Times*, May 5, 1940. (Italics supplied.)

11. *Ibid.*, May 16, 1940. (Italics supplied.)

12. *Ibid.*, May 22, 1940.

"During my trips across the country in the past few weeks I have found no material difference of opinion between people in the West and Far West and in the East on the European outlook," Mr. Willkie said. "An overwhelming number of people in this country believe that we should give all possible aid, *short of war*, of course, to the Allies. . . ."

When asked if he thought it possible that the Republicans would write in an isolation plank in their platform, Mr. Willkie said:

"I don't think there is any chance that the Republicans will adopt any isolation plank. I haven't been able to find any strong isolation groups in the Republican party and I am sure that the country is overwhelmingly in favor of granting immediate *aid to the Allies?*"¹³

Answering questions at a press conference in Washington, June 12, 1940, Mr. Willkie said respecting his own attitude:

As to foreign affairs, as far as assistance to the democracies is concerned, *I am in accord with the National Administration*. I think the President is too secretive and too emotional about the details of his foreign policy, but generally I am in full accord with his program. Generally speaking, as far as entering the war is concerned, it should be the duty of the President to act as a resistant and a deterrent force, and a restraining influence upon impulses to go into this or any war. His position should be that we are not to go in unless absolutely compelled to.¹⁴

To 8,000 Republicans assembled at Boston, Mr. Willkie presented his views on peace and war in three brief paragraphs:

Many persons have asked me whether, if I were nominated and elected, I would lead the United States to war.

My reply is that the Chief Executive should not lead the people to war unless and until the people insist upon that action.

13. *Ibid.*, June 9, 1940. (Italics supplied.)

14. *Ibid.*, June 13, 1940. (Italics supplied.)

duty of the Chief Executive to prevent war if he can possibly do so. In that awful decision he should not push Congress. Congress should push him. In a democracy only the people have a right to decide upon war. The duty of a President is to be the restraining and the calming influence in all periods of crisis.

And, personally, *in spite of my belief that we would help the Allies in every possible way, I have been against getting into this war, or any other war, and I still m.*¹⁶

In an address to Connecticut delegates about to depart for the Republican convention, Mr. Willkie declared that he favored aid to the Allies “short of war,” and explained later that he would favor extending credits to them if necessary. He summed up his case tersely: “I am one of those who favor giving every material assistance we can to the democracies of Europe in these critical times. *But by the same token talk of sending American boys over there when we have no material or equipment is sheer nonsense.*”¹⁶

Speaking in Brooklyn, June 18, 1940, Mr. Willkie reiterated his endorsement of aid to the Allies but made his emphasis on keeping the country out of war more decisive in letter and tone:

... despite our whole-hearted sympathy for the Allied cause, we must stay out of war. In the stress of these times, when our hearts are confused with emotion, we must keep our heads clear. We do not intend to send men from the shores of this continent to fight in any war. This is not mere selfishness on our part; we shall not serve the cause of democracy and human freedom by becoming involved in the present war; we shall serve that cause by keeping out of war. I believe in national defense, not as a step toward war but as a protection against it.

It is the duty of the President of the United States to recognize the determination of the people to stay out of war and to do nothing by word or deed that will undermine that determination. No man has the right to use the great powers of the Presidency

15. *Ibid.*, June 15, 1940. (Italics supplied.)

16. *Ibid.*, June 16, 1940. (Italics supplied.)

to lead the people, indirectly, into war; only the people through their elected representatives can make that awful decision and there is no question as to their decision.¹⁷

In a press interview at the opening of the Republican convention in Philadelphia, Mr. Willkie was asked by reporters whether he approved aid to the Allies. His answer was: "I favor all possible aid to the Allies without going to war." A woman bystander interjected the question: "Doesn't that mean war?" This inquiry he turned aside by saying: "That's a matter of opinion."¹⁸

The Peace Pledge of the Republican National Convention

Long before the Republican convention met at Philadelphia late in June, 1940, accounts of conflicts within the party over a foreign policy plank for the platform appeared in the press. Reports from the West carried the news that delegates from that region were coming prepared to write into the platform an unequivocal pledge against involving the country in foreign war. In the East, however, Republican sentiments were not so uniform. In that section especially were many Republicans who believed that the United States should intervene in the European war immediately or sometime in the near future. So far they had carried on their propaganda under the slogan: "Defend America by aiding the Allies." But nowhere in the Republican party was there a considerable body of members who maintained openly and frankly that they were in favor of putting the United States into the war by constitutional methods—a declaration of war by Congress. Republicans who cherished interventionist designs did not often venture to disclose them publicly as yet and they adopted the strategy of working for an anti-war plank, with an escape clause, and for a plank emphasizing aid to the Allies that might carry the country on the road to war.¹⁹

One of the trial suggestions broached before the Republi-

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, June 19, 1940.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* June 23, 1940.

cans assembled—a scheme ascribed to Governor Alfred M. Landon—was a projected foreign policy plank for the platform to read as follows: “We favor all proper aid to the Allies that does not involve any commitment that will take us into war unless the vital interests of America are threatened in a tangible and concrete way.” To the editors of the *New York Times*, the proposition attributed to Governor Landon was “a straightforward statement.” It seemed to meet the *Times* requirement that the Republicans “speak openly and plainly” instead of dodging the issue by a statement that could mean different things to different persons.²⁰ Mr. Landon’s plan for starting with “all proper aid” encountered snags in the platform committee then at work in preparation for the convention the next week. “Old-time isolationists” would have nothing whatever to do with it. Taking a middle course, Dr. Glenn Frank urged the adoption of an anti-war plank with an escape clause: a declaration against involvement in the European war, *unless* American interests were “vitally and concretely concerned,” a denunciation of President Roosevelt’s policies as leading the country to war, and an approval of aid to the Allies “through the normal channels of trade,” with safeguards against military commitments.²¹

While the Republican platform-makers were wrestling with the foreign policy plank, President Roosevelt spread consternation in their ranks by appointing Henry L. Stimson as Secretary of War and Frank Knox as Secretary of the Navy. Both were orthodox Republicans known to be in favor of powerful aid to the Allies and a strong policy in dealing with the Axis countries; that is, in favor of marching as if to war, perhaps to war itself. President Roosevelt’s stroke, the *New York Times* reported, “changed the whole pattern of the convention.” Interventionists engaged in advocating “aid to Britain” were embarrassed. Isolationists and even those in the middle of the road took the appointments

²⁰ Editorial, *New York Times*, June 19, 1940.

to signify preparations for war and were inclined to make an attack on the Democrats as the war party and to line up the Republicans as the peace party.²²

For practical purposes, President Roosevelt's action in putting Mr. Stimson and Mr. Knox at the head of the war agencies in his Administration created difficulties for the Republican interventionists who had hoped to insert a plank in favor of unconditional aid to the Allies. But the interventionists were still undaunted and what was more they had money to dispense for campaign purposes. So the compromisers went to work on the proposal that the matter of foreign policy be treated briefly and vaguely in the platform, and that the party's stand on that subject be left largely to the candidate nominated for President. As expected this design drew fire from the isolationists, who threatened to take the fight from the committee room to the floor of the convention. Furthermore to neither factions did there seem to be much sense in a campaign if the Republicans played a "me too" game for President Roosevelt.²⁸

Despite the efforts of reporters for interventionist papers to make it appear that the Republicans would agree upon a compromise plank which was strong on aid to the Allies and weak in opposition to war, nothing in the records of the convention shows that such a project was possible at any moment. A large majority of the Republican delegates at Philadelphia were in favor of some kind of aid to the Allies, but the phrase was meaningless without definitions of the "aid" and the methods of giving it. Moreover, the resolve of the anti-war group at Philadelphia was so inexorable that no vague definition of the "aid" and the methods could have escaped its watchful eyes and its determination to put the party on record against the war. In fact, it was reported by William Allen White, on what he called "fairly good authority," that the Republicans were in negotiation with anti-

²² *Ibid.* June 21, 1940.

war Democrats with an idea of getting their support if the Democrats at their own coming convention “went too far toward war.” 24

As the hours ticked off, the anti-war Republicans at the convention seemed to gain in force. They could not defeat all references in the platform to aid for the Allies; nor did a majority of them so desire apparently. Yet they were staunch in their resolve to make the anti-war plank stiff in its terms and pin “the label of ‘war party’ on the Democrats.” While the contest over the platform was still on, the sentiments of the anti-war majority were expressed by Herbert K. Hyde, chairman of the platform committee, and avowed with striking brevity: “We intend to keep faith with the fathers and mothers of this nation and guarantee to them that the youth of America will never be called upon to cross any man’s sea to settle European or Asiatic quarrels. Instead of saving the world for democracy, we propose to make democracy real and effective for the American people in the United States. We can’t police the world.” 25

In an address to the convention on June 25, 1940, Ex President Herbert Hoover presented three axioms of policy for the Republicans to consider. First, the “immediate dangers” to the United States are not to be over-exaggerated. Second, preparedness must be “competent.” Third, the supplying of materials and munitions to nations fighting for their freedom must be facilitated, subject to two limitations: no action of the kind that “takes us to war” should be permitted and “as liberty lives by law we must act within the law.” 26

Mr. Hoover’s speech upheld the hands of the anti-war Republicans at the convention and led to modifications in the plank, which made it a still stronger manifesto against getting the United States into the war and in support of better preparedness for defense in this hemisphere. The modifications

24. “Republicans Act Like Democrats,” *ibid.*, June 25, 1940.

25. *New York Times*, June 25, 1940, p. 1.

26. *Ibid.*, June 26, 1940.

also sharpened the attack on the Roosevelt Administration as leading the country on the road to war. When interventionist Republicans sought to weaken these changes by inserting words of double meaning, the anti-war bloc again threatened to take the fight to the floor of the convention where they felt sure of winning immediate and full endorsement. Some trimming of phrases was effected by compromise but, as the *New York Times* reported, "the non-interventionists were flushed with victory." Even Governor Landon, despite his position in the party, yielded to the "isolationists" and did not risk a conflict with them before the whole body of delegates.²⁷

At length the bloc of Republicans in favor of adopting a strong foreign policy that might justify or lead to war gave up the struggle in the resolutions committee and a foreign affairs plank that represented a victory for the non-interventionists was unanimously reported to the convention. One of the chief leaders of the non-interventionist bloc, C. Wayland Brooks, of Illinois, called upon the convention to adopt the entire platform "so that the party might offer itself to the country as the instrument for keeping the United States out of war." Hamilton Fish, ranking Republican member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, declared that the platform made the Republican party the peace party, and the Democrats a war party.²⁸

As to participation in war, the Republican platform was unequivocal: "The Republican party is firmly opposed to involving this nation in foreign war." To this affirmation was added no "escape" clause, such as *unless* or *except* this or that. After this anti-war pledge came a denunciation of the Roosevelt Administration as responsible for national confusion, weakness, and the dangers of involvement in war.

To appreciate the full force of the Republican manifesto, the foreign policy and defense section of the platform must be studied in detail. It read:

²⁷ *Ibid.* June 26, 1940, p. 1.

The Republican party is firmly opposed to involving this nation in foreign war.

We are still suffering from the ill effects of the last World War—a war which cost us a twenty-four billion-dollar increase in our national debt, billions of uncollectible foreign debts and the complete upset of our economic system, in addition to the loss of human life and irreparable damage to the health of thou sands of our boys.

The present National Administration has already spent for all purposes more than fifty-four billion dollars, has boosted the national debt and current Federal taxes to an all-time high, and yet by the President's own admission we are still wholly unprepared to defend our country, its institutions and our individual liberties in a war that threatens to engulf the whole world, and this in spite of the fact that foreign wars have been in progress for two years or more and that military information concerning these wars and the rearmament programs of the warring nations has been at all times available to the National Administration through its diplomatic and other channels.

The Republican party stands for Americanism, preparedness and peace. We accordingly fasten upon the New Deal full responsibility for our unpreparedness and for the consequent danger of involvement in war.

We declare for the prompt, orderly and realistic building of our national defense to the point at which we shall be able not only to defend the United States, its possessions and essential out posts from foreign attack, but also efficiently to uphold in war the Monroe Doctrine. To this task the Republican party pledges itself when entrusted with national authority.

In the meantime, we shall support all necessary and proper defense measures proposed by the Administration in its belated effort to make up for lost time; but we deplore explosive utterances by the President directed at other governments, which serve to imperil our peace, and we condemn all Executive acts and proceedings which might lead to war without the authorization of the Congress of the United States.

Our sympathies have been profoundly disturbed by invasion of unoffending countries and by disaster to nations whose ideals most closely resemble our own. We favor the extension to all peoples fighting for liberty, or whose liberty is threatened, of

such aid as shall not be in violation of international law or inconsistent with the requirements of our own national defense.

We believe that the spirit which should animate our entire defensive policy is determination to preserve not our material interests merely, but those liberties which are the priceless

The lines relative to aid for the nations fighting for liberty deserve special scrutiny. They read, to repeat: "We favor the extension to all peoples fighting for liberty, or whose liberty is threatened, of such aid as shall not be in violation of international law or inconsistent with the requirements of our own national defense." The word "international" as used to qualify "law" was highly significant. It meant, without any quibbling, that the aid given to one or more belligerents in the war must be furnished by private persons and concerns in the form of munitions, goods, and services, at their own risk, financial and otherwise; and in no case by the Government of the United States at its expense and risk. International law, as then understood by all persons familiar with it, characterized as an act of war the supplying of munitions by a neutral government to any government engaged in war with another. The anti-war Republicans who inserted this restriction on aid to the Allies in the platform knew exactly what they were doing. They proposed to keep the Government of the United States out of the business of aiding belligerents in Europe by supplying them the sinews of war at public expense, by resorting to acts of war.

The Peace Pledge of the Democratic National Convention

When the Democratic delegates assembled for their convention at Chicago in mid-July, they had before them in dubitable evidences of a large anti-war sentiment in the country. The Republicans at Philadelphia had declared with out quibbling: "The Republican party is firmly opposed to

29. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1940.

had recently indicated that the Republicans had correctly gauged the temper of the American people in general, despite the existence of a wide-spread desire to aid the Allies in their war with the Axis Powers. Either on their own motion or in response to the demands of their constituents, a very large majority of the Democrats at Chicago shared this sentiment and were dead-set against any platform planks that would authorize actions on the part of the Federal Administration at all likely to eventuate in American participation in a foreign war.

If advocates of a foreign policy slanted in the direction of intervention were first in gathering their forces at the Republican convention in Philadelphia, the tables were turned among the Democrats at Chicago in July. Circumstances were different, of course. It was well settled among the Democrats that President Roosevelt would be nominated for a third term, despite the tradition against it. Moreover, in accordance with the custom followed in nominating a president to succeed himself, it was assumed that President Roosevelt would provide at least a draft of a platform for the convention to adopt if with modifications here and there. In fact, Democrats opposed to the President's policies were in a quandary. It was not definitely known or at least officially declared that Mr. Roosevelt would accept the nomination for a third term and there was no other leader in the party who, in the opinion of party experts, could easily carry the country if nominated at Chicago. It seemed, therefore, that President Roosevelt would want to "write his own ticket and platform," to quote the old political adage.

At the outset it appeared that immemorial party custom would prevail at Chicago. Press reports before the convention assembled ran to the effect that the non-interventionist Democrats were wasting their time in discussing the foreign policy planks of the Democratic platform, "for this part of the prospective campaign document is understood to have been virtually written already. According to word brought by Senators from Washington, the language of the

affairs declaration was outlined in rough several days ago by President Roosevelt, Secretary Hull, and congressional leaders, and in substance is a short paraphrase of the President's latest defense message to Congress," 30 July 10, 1940.

President Roosevelt's message of July 10, 1940, had followed the line that he had adopted at least as early as the autumn of 1939 when the repeal of the embargo on the export of munitions had been at issue. It represented the country as in dire peril from the threats of Axis aggressors, demanded more and bigger armaments "for defense," but offered assurance to the people against involvement in war. In respect of such assurance, the President had said in that message: "That we are opposed to war is known not only to every American, but to every government in the world. We will not use our arms in a war of aggression; we will not send our men to take part in European wars." 31

After a search for the nature of President Roosevelt's proposed foreign policy plank for the party platform, a *New York Times* representative reported: "Some Senators who have insisted that the party must take a strong, unequivocal stand against military involvement in the current European conflict and say they have been informed as to the content of the proposed plank prophesied tonight that it would close the Democratic ranks tightly on this issue. They said Senator Wheeler and his followers would be satisfied." 32

The *Times* reporter also took note of the fact that Senator Wheeler, who had recently threatened to bolt the party if it failed to take a firm stand against involvement in war, was

30. *Ibid.*, July 13, 1940. See above, p. 268.

31. President Roosevelt, well aware of popular hostility to shedding American blood in another European war, had devised sometime before 1940 what seemed to be a definite anti-war formula to the effect that "Whatever happens, we won't send troops abroad." *Events*, May, 1940, p. 332. Joseph Alsop and Robert Kintner, *American White Paper: The Story of American Diplomacy and the Second World War* (Simon & Schuster, 1940). Although this formula allayed the alarms of many citizens who were opposed to going into the war, anti-war Democrats, such as Senator Burton K. Wheeler, held that it was not a sufficient pledge against war in view of various measures promoted and acted upon by the President.

32. *New York Times*, July 13, 1940.

active at Chicago and had already delivered a public address in which he had announced that the platform would contain a clear-cut plank against intervention.³³ The same dispatch added: insistent demands were being made that “the Democratic party pledge itself to a policy of non-intervention in the European war and center its energies on national defense and re-employment.”

This news story also contained the information that the first witness before the platform-drafting subcommittee, Philip Murray, head of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, had taken a strong stand against war. “We cannot accept or adopt any policy,” Mr. Murray said, “which may lead toward involvement of the United States in the European or Asiatic war. Peace must be preserved for the people of the United States.”³⁴

As the Democrats on the subcommittee in charge of drafting the platform began work, they encountered trouble in dealing with President Roosevelt’s representatives in their midst. The anti-war sentiment among the delegates was so strong as to be stunning. Anne O’Hare McCormick, the veteran journalist for the *New York Times*, reported: “To any one who questions the delegates, it is clear that the anti-war pledge is 100 per cent popular. The non-interventionist sentiment reflected here seems more general and more vocal than it was in Philadelphia [among the Republicans].”³³

33. It was Senator Wheeler’s conviction that President Roosevelt’s measures “short of war,” if not blocked, would finally lead to involvement in the war and the sending of American boys to fight in Europe.

34. In making this statement Mr. Murray had the support of the Communists in the labor movement, for at this time Stalin and Hitler were allies under their agreement of the previous year and, according to the Communist “line” during the Communist-Nazi alliance, the war in Europe and Asia was simply “an imperialist war” in which the United States should take no part. Until Hitler and Stalin made their compact in 1939, American Communists had been agitating in favor of a common “front” against Fascism; but after the compact, they besought the American people to stay out of the war, to maintain peace for the United States. After Hitler attacked Russia, in June, 1941, the American Communists again changed their line to conform to the Moscow line and carried on an equally vigorous agitation in favor of “aid to the Allies” and American participation in the war.

When President Roosevelt's party managers at Chicago insisted that his formula, "keep American boys out of war," was sufficient to meet all the demands of the anti-war Democrats, the latter replied that it was a "dodge" which would let him travel "on the road to war" and finally get to war.

But the non-interventionists faced the fact that they had no alternative to the renomination of President Roosevelt and they were many times informed that the platform planks on foreign affairs and defense had to meet his specifications. After attending the first hearings held by the subcommittee on the platform, a shrewd political commentator for the *New York Times*, Turner Catledge, reported: "The general assumption has been all along that President Roosevelt would practically write these declarations [on foreign policy and defense] himself, particularly if *he is to accept third-term nomination*, but he may have considerable trouble in gaining unanimous acceptance of the language he is understood to favor. What the President wants is a virtual repetition by the party of his assurances to Congress last week that no American soldiers will be sent over seas to fight in Europe's wars. That statement is not satisfactory to the strict non-interventionists. . . ."

The "strict non-interventionists" were confirmed in their convictions by efforts of interventionists to force into the platform what was regarded as a war plank. For example, Clark M. Eichelberger, one of the outstanding advocates of "collective security," appeared before the subcommittee as secretary of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, and appealed for "the fullest possible aid short of war to Great Britain in her fight with Germany." 37 It was common knowledge that many members of this committee, whatever its public professions, favored "all-out aid" to Britain no matter how great the peril of war might be in this procedure.38 And Senator Wheeler charged Mr. Eichel

36. *Ibid.*, July 16, 1940. (Italics supplied.)

37. *Ibid.*

berger with “sneaking up on the people”; that is, with sailing under false colors.

While the subcommittee on the platform was still wrestling with the defense and foreign policy planks, William Bankhead, Speaker of the House of Representatives, delivered a keynote address to the convention which ranks among the political curiosities of the age. If party custom was followed, Mr. Bankhead was speaking for President Roosevelt, whose renomination was then a practical certainty; and yet there was not a word in his address that could have offended or disturbed the stoutest anti-war Democrat in the convention or the country. On the contrary it was a bid to the delegates on behalf of the President to follow him as the great champion of peace and neutrality for the United States. It neither defended nor mentioned President Roosevelt’s decisions and actions in foreign affairs which had pleased internationalists and awakened the suspicions of isolationists.

The editors of the *New York Times* were indignant after they read Speaker Bankhead’s address; and under the caption “Democratic Keynote, Eclipse of a Foreign Policy,” they characterized and condemned it, at the same time that they revealed their own interpretation of the “all-out aid to Britain” movement:

... There was not one word in the keynote address last night to the Democratic party, assembled in national convention, about a single one of these policies, a single one of these efforts, of the Roosevelt Administration. There was nothing to suggest that the Administration has been even remotely interested in the problem of collective security. There was not one word about a “quarantine,” or a “concerted effort,” or “methods short of war.” There was not a word about “the material resources of this nation” being made available to democracy in Europe. There was not a word about help for the British people in this hour of their extremity—help at “full speed ahead,” or half speed, or even quarter speed. There was, on the contrary, such a discussion of foreign affairs and of foreign policy as many of the President’s critics in the Senate might well have undertaken.

It was a remarkable performance, which must have had the President's approval. It was so remarkable a performance that at times, in his effort to prove a point, Speaker Bankhead seemed almost to shade the record. Thus, apparently in order to prove that Mr. Roosevelt has always been a staunch advocate of neutrality legislation, he quoted, as if they ran together, two widely separated sentences of the President's statement of August 31, 1935—leaving out a great deal in between, in the course of which the President said that "the inflexible provisions" of the very law that he was signing "might drag us into war instead of keeping us out." Thus, again, he described the cash-and-carry provisions of the present law as the work of the Administration, whereas it is well known that the Administration compromised on cash- and-carry in order to get repeal of the arms embargo. He even failed to note that, thanks to the Administration, the arms embargo—so staunchly defended by the opponents of the President

—had so much as been repealed.

It was not the foreign policy proclaimed by the President at Chicago in 1937, and again in the 1939 message, and again at Charlottesville only a few weeks ago, that Speaker Bankhead espoused last night. It was a very different foreign policy, convention style, 1940. The transformation from old to new is one of the

During the day that followed Mr. Bankhead's keynote address, it was reported in Chicago that the non-interventionists had triumphed in the subcommittee on platform and had written their own foreign policy plank for the convention to adopt. According to press reports, Senator Wheeler was pleased with it. So was Senator McCarran. Senator Walsh, equally non-interventionist in his opinions, declared that the proposed plank would "meet the objections of those people most scrupulous in their desire to keep this country out of war." Even some of President Roosevelt's managers at Chicago seemed willing to approve the plank that so delighted the isolationists.⁴⁰

By a reporter for the *New York Times*, the satisfaction of

39. Editorial, *New York Times*, July 16, 1940.

40. *New York Times*, July 17, 1940.

the strict anti-war Democrats with their triumph “was taken to mean that unless President Roosevelt were to intervene to have the subcommittee’s action modified tomorrow, the platform would emerge with an anti-war plank which might be more restrictive of future Executive action than the one adopted by the Republican convention at Philadelphia.”⁴¹ Indeed if the *Times* reporter had sat in the secret meetings of the subcommittee, his observations on this development could scarcely have been more accurate and penetrating. And for the moment his conclusion was correct: the non interventionists had temporarily forced the adoption of a plank that, if finally approved by the full committee and the convention, would have given a party guarantee to the President’s formula—sending no boys to fight in foreign wars—by adding what one of the delegates in the convention called privately “a clincher.”

At this juncture in the development of the foreign policy plank of the platform, Anne O’Hare McCormick admitted that President Roosevelt had been “outmaneuvered” by the “die-hard isolationists or known non-interventionists.” She reported: “The Roosevelt supporters will now be satisfied, it is said, with a generalized declaration that will enable the head of the ticket to interpret it as he pleases or as circumstances dictate. . . .”⁴²

The victory of the determined non-interventionists was, however, short-lived. As a result of negotiations between President Roosevelt’s managers and the opposition, the “clincher” for pledging the party to keep the country out of war was modified by the addition of what became known as “the escape clause”—“except in case of attack.” Commenting on the final form of the plank, Anne O’Hare McCormick correctly adjudged the outcome. She reported that the apparently plain word “attack” might “easily be extended to mean any assault on American interests, wherever it takes place,” and that, according to the assumption of observers on

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*